MA'ARIFUL QUR'AN

A Comprehensive commentary on the Holy Quran

Volume

2

(Surah Al-Imran, Al-Nisa)

By

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MA‘ĀRIFUL-QUR’ĀN

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Volume 2

(Sūrah ’Āl-‘Imrān, Al-Nisā’)

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بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

الحمد لله رب العالمين، والعاقبة للمتقين، والصلاة والسلام على سيد المرسلين،
وعلى آله واصحابه اجمعين، وعلى كل من تبعهم
باحسان الى يوم الدين

PREFACE

by
Justice Maulānā Muḥammad Tāqī Usmānī

It is a matter of honour and privilege for me to present the second volume of Ma'ariful-Qur'ān. The first volume was welcomed by the readers from all over the world and the stock of first edition came to an end within a very short period. It shows the great interest and enthusiasm of the readers towards an authentic and detailed commentary of the Holy Qur'ān. At the same time there was an increasing demand that the remaining volumes should be published as soon as possible. It was by the grace of Allah that we were able to complete the second and third volumes almost simultaneously and we hope that the third volume will also appear soon after the present one, *inshallah*.

As I have explained in my introduction to the first volume, the translation of the first volume was a combined effort of Professor Muḥammad Ḥasan Askari and Professor Muḥammad Shamīm. The present volume is exclusively translated by the latter, however, the whole manuscript has been revised and edited by me. I am extremely grateful to Prof. Muḥammad Shamīm who, not only undertook the work with his usual sense of commitment and objectivity but also accepted the amendments suggested by me during my revision. The translation of the Qur'anic texts is a joint effort of three members of the committee formed for the purpose, namely, Prof. Muḥammad

Shamīm, Muḥammad Wali Raazi and myself.

I am also grateful to those who wrote letters of appreciation about the first volume or honoured us with their valuable suggestions. All of them were a great source of encouragement for all of us.

Acknowledgments are also due to Mr. Yousuf Noor and Mr. Ishaque Noor whose invaluable support to the project made it easier for us to expedite the work. May Allah bless all of them with His best reward both here and in the Hereafter.

I hope this volume will also be appreciated by the readers. May Allah bless this effort with his approval and make it beneficial for the *Ummah*.

Muḥammad Taqi Usmani
Darul-Uloom, Karachi-14
27 Muharram 1419
24 May 1998

TRANSLITERATION SCHEME

Arabic Letter	Name of Letter		English Transliteration
ا	الف	-- Alif	a
ب	باء	-- bā	b
ت	تاء	-- tā	t
ث	ثاء	-- thā	th
ج	جيم	-- jīm	j
ح	حاء	-- ḥā	ḥ
خ	خاء	-- khā	kh
د	دال	-- dāl	d
ذ	ذال	-- dhāl	dh
ر	راء	-- rā	r
ز	زای	-- zā	z
س	سين	-- sīn	s
ش	شين	-- shīn	sh
ص	صاد	-- ṣād	ṣ
ض	ضاد	-- ḍād	ḍ
ط	طاء	-- ṭā	ṭ
ظ	ظاء	-- ẓā	ẓ
ع	عين	-- ‘ayn	‘
غ	غين	-- ghayn	gh
ف	فاء	-- fā	f
ق	قاف	-- qāf	q
ك	كاف	-- kāf	k
ل	لام	-- lām	l
م	ميم	-- mīm	m
ن	نون	-- nūn	n
ه	هاء	-- hā	h
و	واؤ	-- wāw	w
ء	ہمزہ	-- Hamzah	’
ی	یاء	-- yā	y

Short Vowels

	: Fatḥah	a
	: Kasrah	i
	: Ḍammah	u

Long Vowels

ا	: Shortened Alif	ā
آ	: Maddah Alif	ā
ىِ	: Maddah Yā	ī
وُ	: Maddah Wāw	ū

Dipthongs

اى	:Alif and Yā	ay (also ai in some cases)
او اؤ	: Alif and Wāw	aw (also au in some cases)

Sūrah 'Āl-'Imrān

Verses 1-6

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ

الٓمّٓ ﴿١﴾ اللّٰهُ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ الْحَيُّ الْقَيُّوْمُ ﴿٢﴾ نَزَّلَ عَلَيْكَ
الْكِتٰبَ بِالْحَقِّ مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ وَاَنْزَلَ التَّوْرٰىةَ وَالْاِنْجِيْلَ
﴿٣﴾ مِنْ قَبْلُ هُدًى لِّلنَّاسِ وَاَنْزَلَ الْفُرْقَانَ ۭ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا
بِاٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ شَدِيْدٌ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ عَزِيْزٌ ذُو انْتِقَامٍ ﴿٤﴾ اِنَّ
اللّٰهَ لَا يَخْفٰى عَلَيْهِ شَيْءٌ فِي الْاَرْضِ وَلَا فِي السَّمَاۗءِ ﴿٥﴾
هُوَ الَّذِيْ يُصَوِّرُكُمْ فِي الْاَرْحَامِ كَيْفَ يَشَاۗءُ ۭ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ
الْعَزِيْزُ الْحَكِيْمُ ﴿٦﴾

With the name of Allah
the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful.

Alif Lām Mīm. [1] **Allah: There is no god but He, the Alive, the All-Sustaining.** [2] **He has revealed to you the Book with the truth confirming what has been before it, and sent down the Torah and Injīl**[1][3] **(the Evangile) earlier to give guidance to mankind, and sent down the *Furqān* (the Criterion of right and wrong). Surely, those who have rejected the verses of Allah, for them there is severe punishment. And Allah is Mighty, Lord of Retribution.** [4] **Surely, Allah is such that nothing is hidden from Him, either in the earth or in the heaven.** [5] **He is the one who shapes you in the wombs as He likes. There is no god but He, the Mighty, the Wise.** [6]

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1. Whenever the Holy Qur'ān speaks of the 'Torah and the Injīl' it refers to the original books revealed to the prophets Moses and Jesus عليهما السلام. This should not, therefore, be confused with the present Old and New testaments.

This is the first section of Sūrah 'Āl-'Imrān, the third Sūrah of the Holy Qur'ān. It will be recalled that at the end of the Sūrah Al-Fātiḥah a prayer for guidance to the straight path was made. After that, by beginning the Sūrah Al-Baqarah with الٓمٓ ، ذٰلِكَ الْكِتٰبُ لَا رَيْبَ فِيْهِ (This Book which has no doubt in it), it was pointed out that the prayer made in Sūrah Al-Fātiḥah for guidance to the straight path has been accepted and Allah Almighty has sent down this Qur'ān which provides guidance to the straight path. Then came many injunctions of the Islamic law taken up briefly or in details. As a corollary to this, frequent mention was made of the hostility of the disbelievers and the need to confront them. Towards the end, this sequence was concluded with وَانْصُرْنَا عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ (Help us, then, against disbelieving people) - in the mode of prayer. Since the prayer was made in order that Muslims could confront and prevail over the disbelievers, it was in consonance with that prayer that, in the following Sūrah 'Āl-'Imrān, the text deals with the modalities of dealing with disbelievers, as well as, with the need to carry out *Jihād* against them, verbally and physically. This is, so to speak, an elaboration and extension of وَانْصُرْنَا عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ (Help us, then, against disbelieving people).

A Summary of Meanings

These first five verses of Sūrah 'Āl-'Imrān explain the doctrine of *Tauḥīd,* the Oneness of Allah, which is the basic point of difference between Islam and other religions and between a disbeliever and a true Muslim. Those who believe in the Oneness of Allah (and in all His prophets - عليهم السلام) are Muslims and those who do not so believe are known as disbelievers or non-Muslims. The first verse of this section presents a rational proof of the Oneness of Allah; the second verse, the reported proof [1], followed by an answer to some doubts nursed by disbelievers towards the later part.

The first word, *Alif Lām Mīm* (الم) at the head of the first verse belongs to the special set of words used by the Qur'ān which are words of hidden meaning and are known as *Mutashābihāt,* the real meaning of

1. In the terminology of Islamic theology, a proof based on rational argument is called rational proof while a proof based on a verse of divine book or on a declaration made by an authority or a report narrated by a trustworthy person is called a reported proof.

which is a secret between Allah and His Messenger صلى الله عليه وسلم, and the details of which appear a little later in the section. In the words اللهُ لَآ إِلٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ (Allah: there is no god but He) which follow immediately, the doctrine of the Oneness of Allah has been put forth as a categorical declaration. It means that there is absolutely nothing worthy of worship other than Allah.

Then come the words . . . اَلْحَيُّ الْقَيُّوْمُ (the Alive, the All-Sustaining) which lay out a rational proof of the Oneness of Allah. The essence of the argument is that worship means to present oneself before somebody in utter submission and humility. It, therefore, requires that the one who is being worshipped must occupy the highest point of honour and power and who has to be most perfect from all angles. From this it is obvious that anything which cannot sustain its own being, rather is dependent upon somebody else for its very existence, could hardly claim to have any honour or power in its own right. Therefore, it is crystal clear that all things in this world which have no power to come into being by themselves, nor can they sustain it - be they idols carved in stone, or water, or trees, or angels and apostles - none of them is worthy of worship. The only Being worthy of worship is the One who has always been Alive and Present and shall always live and sustain. Such a Being is none but Allah; there is none worthy of worship but Him.

Verse 3 which follows carries the reported proof of the Oneness of Allah. Briefly stated, it means that the principle of *Tauḥīd* as described in the Holy Qur'ān is not something peculiar to the Qur'ān or the Prophet of Islam. On the contrary, Allah Almighty has sent Scriptures such as the Torah and the Injīl, and His prophets, in earlier times. And this was they all professed and this was they all brought as the message. When the Qur'ān came, it simply confirmed their truth. It did not present any new claim which could pose problems for people in its understanding or acceptance.

The last two verses further fortify the doctrine of *Tauḥīd* on the ground that the attributes of encompassing knowledge and unlimited power are strong proofs of His being the One who possesses the eternal and all-encompassing knowledge and whose power controls everything, and that He is the only One who rightly deserves to be wor-

shipped. Any one having imperfect knowledge and limited power cannot be entrusted with this exalted station.

Tauḥīd a consistent belief preached by all prophets

Verse 2 gives a reported proof in some detail. The agreement of a large number of people on a certain principle from the very beginning of humanity may be taken as a natural proof of it's reality, if they belong to different times and places, having no means of communicating with each other.

Keeping this in view, we see that Sayyidna Ādam عليه السلام was the first prophet who presented the message of *Tauḥīd* before human beings. That the message would remain effective after him through his progeny is not difficult to conceive. But, after a passage of time when the ways of the progeny of Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام shifted away from the original message, there comes Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام (Noah) who calls people towards the same principle. After a long passage of time, Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm, Ismā'il, Isḥāq and Yāqūb عليهم السلام born in Iraq and Syria rise with the same call. Then follow Sayyidnā Mūsā, Hārūn and other prophets in that order who all subscribe to the same principle of *Tauḥīd* and invite people to the same. Then, after another long passage of time, Sayyidnā 'Īsā rises with the same call. In the end, it is Sayyidnā Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā صلى الله عليه وسلم who graces the world with the common call of all prophets.

This is the golden chain of prophets from Sayyidnā Ādam to the Last of the Prophets صلى الله عليه وسلم upto whose time some one hundred and twenty four thousand blessed prophets were born in different periods, speaking different languages, living in different countries. All of them told and taught the same truth. Most of them did not even have the chance to meet each other. They were in an age when, communication through writing was not in vogue, which could make it possible for one prophet to have access to the books and writings of another and might help him to pick up the call of the earlier prophets as his own. Instead, what happened is that everyone from among them appeared centuries apart from each other, and had no source of information about other prophets, except the revelation received by him from Allah Almighty. The consensus of such a large group of persons consisting of not less than one hundred and twenty four thousand men of

different times and places may be enough for establishing the principle, even regardless of their intrinsic trustworthiness. But when one looks at the personal qualities of the noble prophets, and at the highest possible standards of truth and justice set by them, one has to believe that their message is true and their call authentic.

It is narrated in some *aḥādīth* that some Christians came to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and engaged him in a conversation about religion. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم , by the will of Allah, presented these two verses as arguments confirming the Oneness of Allah. The Christians had no answer to refute them.

Lastly, while referring to the absolute power and wisdom of Allah Almighty, verse 6 invites one's attention to the fact that Allah shapes all men and women in the wombs of their mothers according to His supreme wisdom which has created billions of men and women with clear distinguishable features establishing the identity of each individual distinct from all others. He is, therefore, the only One who should be worshipped.

Verse 7

هُوَ الَّذِيٓ اَنْزَلَ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتٰبَ مِنْهُ اٰيٰتٌ مُّحْكَمٰتٌ هُنَّ اُمُّ
الْكِتٰبِ وَاُخَرُ مُتَشٰبِهٰتٌ ؕ فَاَمَّا الَّذِيْنَ فِيْ قُلُوْبِهِمْ زَيْغٌ
فَيَتَّبِعُوْنَ مَا تَشَابَهَ مِنْهُ ابْتِغَآءَ الْفِتْنَةِ وَابْتِغَآءَ تَاْوِيْلِهٖ ۚ وَمَا
يَعْلَمُ تَاْوِيْلَهٗٓ اِلَّا اللّٰهُ ۘ وَالرّٰسِخُوْنَ فِي الْعِلْمِ يَقُوْلُوْنَ اٰمَنَّا بِهٖ ۙ
كُلٌّ مِّنْ عِنْدِ رَبِّنَا ۚ وَمَا يَذَّكَّرُ اِلَّآ اُولُوا الْاَلْبَابِ ﴿٧﴾

He is the One who has revealed to you the Book. A number of its verses are *Muḥkamāt* (of established meaning) - and those are the principal verses of the Book - and others, *Mutashābihāt* (whose definite meanings are unknown). Now those who have crookedness in their hearts go after such part of it as is *mutashābih* seeking (to create) discord and searching for its interpretation while no one knows its interpretation except Allah. And those well-grounded in knowledge say: "We believe therein; all is from our Lord." And only the men of understanding do observe the advice. [7]

Moving from the affirmation of the principle of Allah's Oneness, the text now answers some doubts raised against it. As stated briefly a little earlier, this verse was revealed in a specific background. Once a group of Christians came to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and started talking about religion. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم refuted their doctrine of Trinity in details and proved the Oneness of Allah with reference to the eternal existence, the perfect power, the all-encompassing knowledge and the most unique creativity of Allah Almighty who had to be One and indivisible. The Christians had to accept these premises and once *Tauḥīd* was proved, the converse, that is, the belief in Trinity was also proved untenable. The Christians then expressed their doubts about some words of the Holy Qur'ān in which Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام i.e. Jesus Christ has been called *'Rūhullāh'* (the Spirit of Allah) or *'Kalimatullāh'* (the Word of Allah), which according to them led to prove that Sayyidnā 'Īsā had a share in the divinity of Allah.

Through this verse, Allah Almighty has put an end to these doubts by saying that such expressions are in the category of *Mutashābihāt* where the outward meaning is not intended; they are, rather, a secret between Allah and His Messenger, the reality of which cannot become manifest to others for whom it is not even appropriate to go about determining the possible meanings of these words. One has to have faith in them by believing that whatever Allah Almighty has elected to mean through them is the truth. It is not permissible to dig deeper and mount further researches in this direction.

Meaning of محكم : *Muḥkam* and متشابه : *Mutashābih*

Allah Almighty has, by mentioning محكمات : *Muḥkamāt* and متشابہات : *Mutashābihāt* right there in the beginning, pointed out towards a general principle which, if understood, could eradicate many doubts and disputes. The principle is that the Holy Qur'ān has two kinds of verses; one is known as the *Muḥkamāt* (of established meaning) and the other as the *Mutashābihāt* (whose definite meanings are unknown).

Muḥkamāt is the name of verses the meaning of which is open and clear to one who knows the rules of Arabic grammar fairly well. But when the meanings and explanations of particular verses are not clear to such a person, then, such verses are called the *Mutashābihāt*. (Maẓharī, v.2)

Allah Almighty has called the first kind of verses, that is, the *Muḥkamāt* - ام الكتاب : *'Umm al-Kitāb'* (which has been translated literally as 'mother verses') meaning thereby that such verses are the very root and essence of all teachings, and the meanings and explanations of which are free of doubt or ambiguity.

Since the exact intention of the second kind of verses, that is, the *Mutashābihāt,* remains ambiguous and uncertain, therefore, the correct method of their interpretation would be to harmonize them with the first kind, that is, the *Muḥkamāt.* Then, the rule is that any interpretation of the *Mutashābihāt* which goes against the first kind should be rejected absolutely and only that interpretation should be given credence which is not against the verses of established meaning (*Muḥkamāt*). For example, the Holy Qur'ān has clarified the position of Sayyidnā 'Īsā علیہ السلام (Jesus Christ) by saying إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا عَبْدٌ أَنْعَمْنَا عَلَيْهِ (he is nothing but a servant upon whom We have bestowed Our blessing- 43:59), or as elsewhere in the Qur'ān, by إِنَّ مَثَلَ عِيسَىٰ عِندَ اللَّهِ كَمَثَلِ آدَمَ خَلَقَهُ مِن تُرَابٍ (the example of 'Īsā before Allah is like that of Ādam whom He created from clay - 3:59).

These and several other verses like them show it clearly that Sayyidnā 'Īsā Masīḥ, علیہ السلام , is a chosen servant of Allah created by Him. Therefore, the claim of Christians investing him with godhood and sonship is not correct.

Now, if someone closes his eyes towards all these verses which have an established meaning and unnecessarily coils with the expressions, کلمۃ اللہ (the Word of Allah) and وروح منہ (a spirit from Him) and their likes from the category of *Mutashābihāt* (verses whose definite meanings cannot be ascertained) and starts deducing from them meanings which are against the *Muḥkamāt* of Qur'ān and other consistent statements, then, that would be a simple case of going astray and being obstinate.

The real meanings of *Mutashābihāt* are known to Allah alone. It is He who, in His mercy and favour, informs anyone He chooses of whatever part of the unknown He wills. Therefore, it is not correct to try and impose a certain meaning based on one's personal opinion.

The purpose of the statement, فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ زَيْغٌ 'now those who have

crookedness in their hearts...' is that people who are gentle in nature do not go about investigating much about *Mutashābihāt*. Instead, they accept these verses and simply believe in them taking these as the true Word of Allah. They realise that He, due to some wise consideration of His, did not reveal to us their meaning. This approach is, indeed, the safest and the most cautious. But, quite contrary to this, there still are people with crookedness in their hearts. They, with eyes closed, go on investigating and deliberating on *Mutashābihāt* to justify meanings that suit their fancies so that they can lead people astray. For such people, stern warnings have appeared in the Qur'ān and *Ḥadīth*.

Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها says that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: When you see people busy investigating into the *Mutashābihāt*, stay away from them because these are the same people Allah has talked about (in the Qur'ān). (Bukhari, v.2)

In another *ḥadīth*, he said: I have three apprehensions about my people (*ummah*): (1) That they become wealthy and start to envy each other resulting in rifts and bloodshed; (2) that the Book of Allah is trifled with (that is, even the uninitiated and ignorant claim its perfect understanding through translations) and that which is not supposed to be understood (*Mutashābihāt*) becomes the very object of deliberations and investigations although Allah alone is the One who knows their meaning; (3) that they allow their knowledge, once it has increased, go to waste by forsaking efforts to increase it further. (Ibn Kathīr with reference to Tabarāni)

Who are the ones 'well grounded' in knowledge as identified towards the end of the verse: وَالرّٰسِخُوْنَ فِى الْعِلْمِ يَقُوْلُوْنَ اٰمَنَّا بِهٖ ? Muslims scholars have offered different explanations in this connection. The weightier position is that the reference here is to *ahl al-sunnah wa al-jama'ah*, the main body of Muslims who give credence only to that interpretation and explanation of the Holy Qur'ān and Sunnah which has been authentically reported from the blessed Companions, the righteous generations following them and upon which there is the consensus of the Muslim community, and who believe that the *Muḥkamāt* (verses of established meaning) of Qur'ān are its axis and centre, and who, humbly confessing their limitations of knowledge and insight, leave to Al-

lah the real meanings of *Mutashābihāt* which are beyond their comprehension and conceptualization. They are never proud of their knowledge, howsoever perfect it may be, nor of the strength of their faith. Instead of that , they constantly pray to Allah seeking steadfastness from Him, and His grace and mercy. They do not have mischief-prone temperaments which would instigate them to follow *Mutashābihāt* alone as the object of their intellectual pursuit. They take both, the *Muḥkamāt* and the *Mutashābihāt*, to be the truth because they firmly believe that both kinds of verses have emanated from one single source. But, the need to find out the meanings of the *Muḥkamāt* was, of course, useful and essential for us. This Allah Almighty has not kept secret. The meanings of such verses have been made very open and clear. Since Allah Almighty has elected not to disclose the meanings of *Mutashābihāt* to us due to some wise consideration of His, it is simply not necessary for us to find it out. That we believe in them as they are is quite sufficient. (Abridged from Maẓharī)

Verses 8 - 9

رَبَّنَا لَا تُزِغْ قُلُوبَنَا بَعْدَ إِذْ هَدَيْتَنَا وَهَبْ لَنَا مِنْ لَّدُنْكَ رَحْمَةً
إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْوَهَّابُ ﴿٨﴾ رَبَّنَا إِنَّكَ جَامِعُ النَّاسِ لِيَوْمٍ لَّا رَيْبَ
فِيهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُخْلِفُ الْمِيعَادَ ﴿٩﴾

"Our Lord, do not let our hearts go crooked after You have given us guidance, and bestow upon us mercy from Your own. Surely, You, and You alone, are the Bestower. [8] **Our Lord, You are going to assemble all the people on a day in which there is no doubt. Verily, Allah does not go back on His promise."** [9]

Sequence

The previous verse mentioned 'those well-grounded in knowledge' who, in spite of their excellent knowledge, were not proud of their excellence. Instead of that, they elected to have faith in what comes from their Lord. The present verse mentions yet another excellence of theirs - that they pray for steadfastness on the right path, not for any worldly gains, but for salvation in the life-to-come.

Commentary

The first verse (8) shows us that guidance and straying are from

Allah alone. When Allah intends to guide someone, He makes his heart tilt towards what is good and right; and when He decides to let someone go astray, He turns his heart away from the straight path.

This is just as it was said in a *hadith* of the Holy Prophet ﷺ : There is no heart which is not there in between the two of Allah's fingers - He makes it firm on the truth as long as He wills, and turns it away from the truth when He wills.

He is Allah, absolute in power. He does what He wills. Therefore, those who are concerned about how to remain firm in their faith, they go to the source - requesting and praying Allah for steadfastness. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم always used to pray for it as it appears in a *hadith:* يَا مُقَلِّبَ الْقُلُوبِ ثَبِّتْ قُلُوبَنَا عَلَى دِينِكَ (O reverser of hearts, make our hearts firm on the faith chosen by You). (Mazharī)

Verses 10 - 12

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَنْ تُغْنِيَ عَنْهُمْ أَمْوَالُهُمْ وَلَا أَوْلَادُهُمْ مِنَ
اللَّهِ شَيْئًا ۖ وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمْ وَقُودُ النَّارِ ﴿١٠﴾ كَدَأْبِ آلِ فِرْعَوْنَ ۙ
وَالَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ ۚ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا ۚ فَأَخَذَهُمُ اللَّهُ بِذُنُوبِهِمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ
شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ ﴿١١﴾ قُلْ لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا سَتُغْلَبُونَ وَتُحْشَرُونَ
إِلَىٰ جَهَنَّمَ ۚ وَبِئْسَ الْمِهَادُ ﴿١٢﴾

"Surely, those who disbelieve, their wealth and their children shall not at all suffice them a bit against Allah. And those are the fuel of the Fire [10] **- a case similar to that of the House of Pharaoh and those before them. They denied our signs. So, Allah caught them for their sins. And Allah is severe at punishment.** [11] **Say to those who disbelieve: "You shall soon be overcome and gathered into Hell. And it is an evil bed to rest."** [12]

Sequence

The text now shifts from the verbal confrontation with disbelievers on the warnings about the coming physical encounter as pointed out in verse 12 - 'You shall soon be overcome (by Muslims)' - while the verses earlier (10 and 11) serve as the introduction.

Commentary

Some readers of verse 12: قُلْ لِّلَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا سَتُغْلَبُوْنَ , just cited, above may have some doubt about disbelievers being overcome because this is not the case with all disbelievers of the world. But, this doubt is unfounded as the disbelievers referred to here are the disbelievers and Jews of that particular time - from among whom, the pagans were overcome when killed or taken prisoners, and the Jews were overcome through killing or imprisonment as well as through *Jizya* and extradition. Therefore, this 'overcoming' of disbelievers mentioned in the verse simply does not refer to disbelievers universally.

Verses 13

قَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ اٰيَةٌ فِىْ فِئَتَيْنِ الْتَقَتَا ؕ فِئَةٌ تُقَاتِلُ فِىْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ وَاُخْرٰى كَافِرَةٌ يَّرَوْنَهُمْ مِّثْلَيْهِمْ رَاْىَ الْعَيْنِ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ يُؤَيِّدُ بِنَصْرِهٖ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ ؕ اِنَّ فِىْ ذٰلِكَ لَعِبْرَةً لِّاُولِى الْاَبْصَارِ ﴿۱۳﴾

"There was a sign for you in the two groups who faced each other: One group fighting in the way of Allah, and the other disbelieving, seeing themselves as twice of them, with open eyes. And Allah gives strength with His help to whomsoever He wills. Indeed, there is a lesson therein for those who have eyes." [13]

Sequence

In the previous verses, the disbelievers were informed that they will be overcome. Now, cited in this verse is an example of how the prophecy has been fulfilled.

Commentary

This verse refers to the Battle of Badr in which the disbelievers had about 1000 men, 700 camels and 100 horses, while the Muslim *mujāhidīn* were just over 300, having a total of 70 camels, 2 horses, 6 armours and 8 swords. The encounter was certainly strange as each combating group saw the opponent being twice its own numbers. The sighting of so many Muslims inspired awe in the hearts of the disbelievers, while Muslims who saw the disbelievers as twice of them turned to Allah more fervently. They had hopes of Allah's help, and ultimate victory, because they had placed their total trust in Allah, were

steadfast and sincerely believed in the promise of Allah revealed to them in the following words:

إِنْ يَكُنْ مِّنْكُمْ مِائَةٌ صَابِرَةٌ يَّغْلِبُوْا مِائَتَيْنِ

If there be among you a hundred patient ones, they shall overcome two hundred. (8:66)

If the actual number of disbelievers which was three times more than their own were to be realized by Muslims, they may have been overawed. This state of sighting the numbers of the other group as twice its own was at a particular time. At another time each of the two combating groups felt the other one as low in numbers, as it would appear later in Sūrah al-Anfāl.

To sum up, it can be safely said that making a small group of people with very little to fight against a much stronger group and score a victory, as prophecied in Makkah, is an unusual event full of lessons for the observant and the discerning.

Verses 14 - 17

زُيِّنَ لِلنَّاسِ حُبُّ الشَّهَوٰتِ مِنَ النِّسَآءِ وَالْبَنِيْنَ وَالْقَنَاطِيْرِ
الْمُقَنْطَرَةِ مِنَ الذَّهَبِ وَالْفِضَّةِ وَالْخَيْلِ الْمُسَوَّمَةِ وَالْاَنْعَامِ
وَالْحَرْثِ ؕ ذٰلِكَ مَتَاعُ الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا ۚ وَاللّٰهُ عِنْدَهٗ حُسْنُ الْمَاٰبِ
﴿۱۴﴾ قُلْ اَؤُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِخَيْرٍ مِّنْ ذٰلِكُمْ ؕ لِلَّذِيْنَ اتَّقَوْا عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ
جَنّٰتٌ تَجْرِىْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَا وَ اَزْوَاجٌ مُّطَهَّرَةٌ
وَّرِضْوَانٌ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ بَصِيْرٌ ۢ بِالْعِبَادِ ﴿۱۵﴾ اَلَّذِيْنَ يَقُوْلُوْنَ
رَبَّنَآ اِنَّنَآ اٰمَنَّا فَاغْفِرْ لَنَا ذُنُوْبَنَا وَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ ﴿۱۶﴾
اَلصّٰبِرِيْنَ وَالصّٰدِقِيْنَ وَالْقٰنِتِيْنَ وَالْمُنْفِقِيْنَ وَالْمُسْتَغْفِرِيْنَ
بِالْاَسْحَارِ ﴿۱۷﴾

It has been made attractive for people to love the desires; that is, the women, the children, the hoarded heaps of gold and silver, the branded horses, the cattle and the tillage. That is an enjoyment of the worldly life. And with Allah lies the beauty of the final resort. [14]

Say: "Shall I tell you what is far better than that? For those who fear (Allah), there are with their Lord gardens beneath which rivers flow where they shall live for ever, and wives purified, and approval from Allah. And Allah is watchful over His servants" [15] **- those who say: "Our Lord, surely we have believed, so forgive us our sins and save us from the punishment of the Fire"** [16] **(and those who are) the patient, the truthful and the devout, who spend (in Allah's way) and who seek forgiveness in pre-dawn hours."** [17]

Sequence

That the hostility of disbelievers should be countered with *Jihad* against them was the theme in several previous verses. Now, in these verses the text explains the reason why the disbelievers indulge in hostility against Islam and Muslims. The reason for this and for all evil deeds is, in fact, the love of the worldly life. There are all sorts of people who line up against the truth - some driven by greed for wealth or power, some goaded by lust and some in defence of false ancestral customs. All this is just to grab a share in the temporal enjoyments of the present life which has been described in these verses.

Commentary

The limits of one's love for worldly enjoyments

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said: حُبُّ الدُّنْيَا رَأْسُ كُلِّ خَطِيْئَةٍ. It means that the love of *dunyā* (worldly life or worldly enjoyments) is the main source of all errors. The first verse here names some of the most desired things and says that they have been made to look attractive and therefore, people go after them enticed by their glamour brushing aside any concerns for the life to come, if there be any.

It will be noted that things named here are the center of attraction for human beings, out of which, women come first and then the children. For whatever man goes about procuring is because of the needs of his family - wife and children - to share it with him. Then come other forms of wealth and possessions - gold, silver, cattle and tillage - which attract people secondarily.

Why has man been made in a way that he is temperamentally attracted to these things? The answer is that Allah has done so in His ultimate wisdom. Let us consider:

1. If man was not naturally inclined to and even enamoured with these things, all wordly business would have gone topsy-turvy. Why would someone sweat on farms and fields? Why would a wage-earner or an entrepreneur burn themselves out in an industry, or a businessman would put his capital and labour in buying and selling things? The secret was that the people of the world were made to grow and survive through this instinctive love for such things whereby they would go about collecting and preserving these. The worker goes out to earn some money. The well-to-do goes out to hire a worker for his job. The trader brings forth his best merchandise for display waiting for a customer to earn something from. A customer goes to the shopping mall to buy things he needs to live or be happy with. If we think about it, we shall realize that it was the love for what is desirable in this mortal world which brought them out of their homes, and in this silent process, gave the world a strong and ongoing social system.

There is yet another element of wisdom behind it. If man had no liking for the blessings he finds in the mortal world, he would obviously have no taste or desire for blessings promised in the world to come. That being the case, why would he ever take the trouble of doing what is good and thus become deserving of Paradise, and not doing what is evil and thus become safe from Hell?

There is still another element of wisdom which is more significant for consideration here. Is it not that man, with love for these things in his heart, has been put to a test as to who becomes engrossed in the enjoyments of the present life and forgets the life to come, and who comes to realize the real and temporal nature of these things, shows concern for them only in proportion to his needs, and then channels all his efforts into deeds that would make his next life good and safe? The wisdom behind the adornment of such things has been pointed out elsewhere in the Holy Qur'ān itself:

إِنَّا جَعَلْنَا مَا عَلَى الْأَرْضِ زِينَةً لَّهَا لِنَبْلُوَهُمْ أَيُّهُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا

We made whatever there is on the earth its adornment so that We can test as to who among them acts best. (18:7)

The verse cited above clearly shows that the glamourizing of such desirable things is an act of God based on many wise considerations

However, as for verses where such glamourization of things has been attributed to Satan - for example, زَيَّنَ لَهُمُ الشَّيْطٰنُ اَعْمَالَهُمْ (the Satan has made their deeds look attractive to them - 8:48; 16:63; 27:24; 29:38.) - there the reference is to things that are evil, religiously and rationally; or, the reference is to a false sense of adornment which is evil because it transgresses the limits set by Allah. Otherwise, it is not absolutely bad to adorn the lawful things. In fact, there may be a few benefits in doing so. Therefore, this act of placing attraction in things in some verses has been attributed to Allah, as stated above.

Let us summarize our discussion so far and see how it works for us in our practical life. We now know that Allah created, in His grace and wisdom, all good things of life in this world, made them look attractive and - worthy of man's effort to acquire them so that man can be tested. This is one of Allah's many acts of wisdom to see whether the man gets swayed by the glamour of the fleeting enjoyment of things, or remembers the Creator of these things, or the man forgets the very Creator of his own being as well. Aided by this realization, does man make these things a medium through which to know and love Allah; or, is it that he would elect to get totally lost in the love for these known transitory things, and forget all about the real Master and Creator before Whom he must appear on the Last Day and account for whatever he did.

On the one hand is a person who has the best of both worlds. He enjoys the blessings of the present life and uses its means for success in the life to come. For him, the enjoyments of the mortal world did not become a road-block; rather, they proved to be the milestones which led him safely into a prosperous Hereafter. But, for the other person these very things became the causes that led him to squander his chance of having a good life in the Hereafter, and also became the very cause of perennial punishment. Frankly, if we were to look a little deeper, we would realize that these things become a sort of punishment for him right here in this world as well. For such people, the Holy Qur'ān says:

فَلَا تُعْجِبْكَ اَمْوَالُهُمْ وَلَآ اَوْلَادُهُمْ اِنَّمَا يُرِيْدُ اللّٰهُ لِيُعَذِّبَهُمْ بِهَا فِى الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا

So, their wealth and children should not attract you. Allah wants to punish them with these in this lowly life - 9:55.

Thus, the lesson is that we can seek good things of life with moderation and even store them in accordance with our genuine needs. In this lies the ultimate good of this life and the life to come. Using them in prohibited ways, or indulging in them so excessively that one forgets the post-death reality of *Ākhirah* is nothing but self-destruction. The poet-sage, Maulānā Rūmī has illustrated this very eloquently when he said;

آب اندر زیر کشتی پشتی است
آب درکشتی هلاك کشتی است

He says that things of this world with which we surround ourselves are like water, and the heart of man is like a boat in it. As long as the water remains beneath and around the boat, it is good and helpful, and certainly guarantees the very purpose of its being there. But, if water gets into the boat, it makes the boat capsize and destroys all that was in it. Similarly, man's wealth and possessions are means of convenience for his role in this world and in the life to come - provided that they do not enter into his heart, sit there, and kill it in the process. Therefore, the verse under discussion, immediately after mentioning some specially desirable things of the world, presents the essential guideline for human beings by saying:

ذٰلِكَ مَتَاعُ الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا وَاللّٰهُ عِنْدَهٗ حُسْنُ الْمَاٰبِ

That is an enjoyment of the worldly life. And with Allah lies the beauty of the final resort. (3:14)

In other words, it means that all these things are there simply to serve a purpose in man's mortal life in the present world and certainly not to have him fall in love with things for their own sake, for the real beauty of the experience lies in one's ultimate resort with Allah in blissful eternity enjoying what would never perish, diminish or weaken.

In the second verse that follows (15), the same subject has been further cleared by saying:

قُلْ اَؤُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِخَيْرٍ مِّنْ ذٰلِكُمْ لِلَّذِيْنَ اتَّقَوْا عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ جَنّٰتٌ تَجْرِىْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا
الْاَنْهٰرُ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَا وَاَزْوَاجٌ مُّطَهَّرَةٌ وَّرِضْوَانٌ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَاللّٰهُ بَصِيْرٌ بِالْعِبَادِ

Say: "Shall I not tell you what is far better than that? For

> those who fear Allah, there are with their Lord gardens beneath which rivers flow, where they shall live for ever, and wives purified, and approval from Allah. And Allah is watchful over His servants."

Here, the address is to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم who is being asked to tell those who become obsessed with imperfect and perishable blessings they find in the present life that he is in a position to lead them on to far better blessings. These shall be the lot of those who fear Allah and are obedient to Him. These blessings are, 'gardens beneath which rivers flow, wives purified and favours from Allah' - the last being the ultimate man can and should aspire for.

It will be recalled that in the preceding verse (14), the total count of blessings that infatuate man was given as six - women, children, heaps of gold and silver, fine horses, cattle and tillage. As compared to that, only three blessings of the Hereafter, that is, the gardens of Paradise, wives purified and the approval from Allah have been identified. Out of the rest, children were not mentioned because man loves children during his life in the world as children help and strengthen him in what he does and through them his name lives on. But, in the Hereafter he would not need such help, nor would he 'die' in which case he may have to look for an heir. Apart from this, whoever has children would have them all in the Paradise. Whoever has no children in the mortal world would, to begin with, just not have the desire to have them in the Paradise. Should someone desire that he may have children, Allah Almighty would bless him with children. According to a *ḥadīth* in Jāmi' al-Tirmidhi, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: 'If a dweller of Paradise wishes to have children, the process of pregnancy, birth and growth of the child will be completed in no time and he would have what he wished for.'

Similarly, gold and silver were not mentioned in relation to the Paradise because gold and silver are needed in the mortal world as material things are bought against them or anything else one needs can be procured through them. In the Hereafter, there will be just no need to buy anything or sell anything or pay for anything. Instead of that, whatever the dweller of Paradise needs will be instantly provided. Incidentally, the Paradise itself is not without gold and silver.

Some sayings of the Prophet ﷺ mention that some places of Paradise will have bricks of gold and silver masoned one after the other. However, in view of the uniqueness of that life, gold and silver were not considered worth mentioning.

Now the horses. In the world of our experience, horses help cover distances. In the other world, there is no travel and no riding but, sound *ḥadīth* reports do prove that fine horses will be presented before the dwellers of Paradise on Fridays which they will ride to go and meet friends and relatives. As is evident, horses were not worth mentioning in this context, which is also true about cattles and farms and their produce. The services they provide have already been provided in the Paradise by Allah Almighty without their medium.

However, should there be someone there who for some unnecessary reason wishes to try farming, he will have his wish granted. As it appears in some reports in al-Ṭabarānī, everything needed for farming will be assembled instantly for such a person. Thereafter the whole process of ploughing, seeding, ripening and cutting will be accomplished in no time and he will have what he wished for before him. So, among the blessings of the *Ākhirah,* the mention of 'wives purified' was considered sufficient because the Holy Qur'ān has another promise for the people of Paradise: وَلَهُم مَّا يَشْتَهُونَ (And for them there is what they wish for). After such a comprehensive declaration, there remains no need to individually mention any particular blessing. Those that have been mentioned are blessings already there without any need to ask for these.

The last and most important blessing mentioned is the approval of Allah Almighty - something one cannot easily conceptualize - after which there is no danger of displeasure from Allah. According to a *ḥadīth*, when the people of Paradise would have settled down there, happy and content without having any desire remaining unfulfilled, Allah Almighty will speak to them asking if they are happy and if they need anything. They will say: Our Lord, You have given us everything, what else could we ever need. Allah Almighty would say: Now I give you the greatest of all blessings - you all have My approval that I will never be displeased with you, and nearness for ever.

Since the danger of Allah's displeasure does not exist in Paradise,

there is also no danger that the blessings of Paradise will ever be taken back or reduced.

It is the very subject of these verses that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has summarized in the following *ḥadīth*:

"الدنيا ملعونة و ملعون ما فيها الاّ ما ابتغى به وجه الله" وفى رواية "الاّ ذكر الله وما والاه او عالمًا او متعلماً "

'Wordly life is cursed and cursed is what is in there, except what is used to seek the pleasure of Allah'. According to another narration: '... except the *Dhikr* (Remembrance) of Allah and what Allah likes and except *'Ālim* (religious scholar) and *Ṭālib 'ilm* (student in religion).'

This *ḥadīth* has been reported by Ibn Mājah and al-Ṭabarānī on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضى الله عنه .

Verses 18 - 19

شَهِدَ اللّٰهُ اَنَّهٗ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ ۙ وَالْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ وَاُولُوا الْعِلْمِ قَآئِمًا ۢ بِالْقِسْطِ ؕ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ الْعَزِيْزُ الْحَكِيْمُ ﴿۱۸﴾ اِنَّ الدِّيْنَ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ الْاِسْلَامُ ۗ وَمَا اخْتَلَفَ الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوا الْكِتٰبَ اِلَّا مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَا جَآءَهُمُ الْعِلْمُ بَغْيًا ۢ بَيْنَهُمْ ؕ وَمَنْ يَّكْفُرْ بِاٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ سَرِيْعُ الْحِسَابِ ﴿۱۹﴾

Allah bears witness that there is no god but He - and (so do) the angels and the men of knowledge - being the One who maintains equity. There is no god but He, the Mighty, the Wise. [18]

Truly, the religion in the sight of Allah is Islam. And those who have been given the Book did not differ (among themselves) except after the knowledge had come to them, (and all this) due to envy against each other. And whoever denies the verses of Allah, then, Allah is swift at reckoning. [19]

The subject of *Tauḥīd* (Oneness of Allah) which began with the opening of Sūrah 'Āl-'Imrān reappears in the first verse in a very special manner. Out of the three witnesses mentioned here, the evidence

of Allah Almighty is in a figurative sense. It means that the being and the attributes of Allah and the manifestations of His power and creativity all over are open signs of His Oneness. Then there are the Messengers and Books sent by Allah, all confirming that truth. The second testimony mentioned is that of angels who are close to Allah. They carry out His instructions and bear testimony (knowing and seeing) that Allah alone is worthy of worship.

The third witness is that of the men of knowledge. This expression, *ulul-'ilm,* means the blessed prophets and men who have the knowledge of Islam. Imām al-Ghazālī and Ibn Kathīr find this a matter of great honour for *'Ulamā* for Allah has mentioned their witness along with His, and that of angels. It is also possible that the term, *ulul-'ilm* (the men of knowledge) may, in an absolute sense, be referring to those who, by conducting an inquiry based on sound intellectual principles, or by deliberating into this universe, could acquire the knowledge of the unity of Allah Almighty - even if they are not *'ālim* or 'men of knowledge' in the traditional sense, whose knowledge is acquired under a formal discipline from Islam's own original sources. The next verse (19) clearly settles that the only faith (*dīn*) acceptable to Allah is Islam. Thus, totally excluding any other faith or religion as acceptable to Allah, the verse completes the subject of Allah's Oneness, any opposition to which is doomed.

Related considerations

Merits of the verse meaning "Allah bears witness"

The verse beginning with شَهِدَ اللّٰهُ: *'shahidal-lāhu'* has a special elegance. Imām al-Baghawī, the renowned *mufassir* reports that two leading Jewish scholars came to Madinah from Syria. With the township of Madīnah before them, they started talking to each other about the looks of the place which matched the prophecy in Torah that the last of the prophets would be living here. Later, they came to know that someone very pious lives here and whom people refer to as the prophet. They went to see the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. Their very first sight of him reminded them of all attributes which Torah had predicted he would have. They presented themselves before him and said: "You are Muḥammad?" He said: "Yes." Again, they said: "You are Aḥmad?" He said: "Yes, I am Muḥammad, and Aḥmad." Then they said:

"We are going to ask you a question. If you answer it correctly, we shall embrace Islam." He said: "Go ahead and ask." They asked: "Which is the greatest witness in the Book of Allah?" This verse of *'shahādah'* (witness) was revealed as an answer to this question. He recited it for them. Both of them embraced Islam immediately.

According to a *ḥadīth* in the Musnad of Aḥmad, when the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم recited this verse in 'Arafat, he said right after that:

وَاَنَا عَلٰى ذٰلِكَ مِنَ الشّٰهِدِيْنَ يَا رَبِّ

And to that, O my Lord, I too am a witness. (Ibn Kathīr)

And a narration from Imām al-A'mash says: Whoever recites this verse and then says: وَاَنَا عَلٰى ذٰلِكَ مِنَ الشّٰهِدِيْنَ يَارَبِّ (And to that, O my Lord, I too am a witness), Allah Almighty will say to the angels on the Last Day: 'My servant has made a promise while I am the Foremost to keep a promise when I make it, so let my servant be admitted into Paradise.' (Ibn Kathīr)

Another *ḥadīth* from Sayyidnā Abū Ayyub al-Anṣārī رضى الله عنه narrates that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: 'Whoever recites *Ayah al-Kursī* (2:255) and the *Ayah* شَهِدَاللّٰهُ : *Shahidal-lāhu* (3:18) and قُلِ اللّٰهُمَّ مَالِكَ الْمُلْكِ: *Qulil-lāhumma mālik al-mulki* upto بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ : *bighairi ḥisāb* (3:26,27), Allah Almighty will forgive all his sins, admit him to Paradise and take care of seventy (i.e. plenty) of his needs, the simplest of these being his forgiveness.' (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī with reference to Dailamī)

Dīn and Islam: An Explanation of the Two words:

The word, *Dīn* (دين) has more than one meaning in the Arabic language, one of them being 'the way'. In the terminology of the Qur'ān, the word, *Dīn* is used to stand for principles and injunctions which are common to all prophets from Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام to the last of the prophets, Sayyidnā Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā صلى الله عليه وسلم . The words, *'sharī'ah* (شريعة) or *'al-minhāj'* (المنهاج) or the word, *'madhhab'* (مذهب) from among the later-day terms, are used to cover subsidiary injunctions, which have been different during different ages and different communities. The Holy Qur'ān says:

شَرَعَ لَكُمْ مِّنَ الدِّيْنِ مَا وَصّٰى بِهٖ نُوْحًا

Allah made you follow the same religion with which He bound

Nūḥ (and other prophets) - 42:13.

This tells us that the *dīn* of all our blessed prophets was one and the same, that is, belief in the most perfect Being and Attributes of Allah, in His being free of all shortcomings and that He alone is worthy of worship, believing in this from the depth of one's heart and confirming it verbally; belief in the Day of Judgement, in the final reckoning of deeds, the reward and the punishment and in Paradise and Hell and in every prophet and messenger sent by Him and in all commandments and injunctions brought by them, believing all this in one's heart and confirming such belief verbally as well.

Now the real meaning of the word, *Islam* is to submit oneself to Allah and be obedient to His commands. Given this meaning, those who believed in the prophets and messengers of their time and were obedient to the commands of Allah they brought to them, were all entitled to be called Muslims, and their religion was Islam. It was in this sense of the word that Sayyidnā Nūḥ said: وَأُمِرْتُ أَنْ أَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ (I have been commanded that I be from among the Muslims - 10:72) and therefore, Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام described himself and his community as Muslims when he said: رَبَّنَا وَاجْعَلْنَا مُسْلِمَيْنِ لَكَ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِنَا أُمَّةً مُّسْلِمَةً لَّكَ (Our Lord, make us Muslims, the submitting ones to Thee, and from our progeny a community of Muslims submitting to Thee - 2:128). And it was in this very sense of the word that the disciples of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام said: وَاشْهَدْ بِأَنَّا مُسْلِمُونَ (And bear witness that we are Muslims - 3:52)

Sometimes this word is applied particularly to the *dīn* and *sharī'ah*, the religion and the law brought finally by the last among the prophets, Sayyidnā Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā صلى الله عليه وسلم. This law abrogated all previous ways in religion and this shall sustain right through the Day of Judgment. Given this meaning of the word *Islam*, it becomes particular to the religion brought by the prophet of Islam and to the large community of his followers. In a well-known *ḥadīth* of Jibra'īl, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has explained Islam in this very manner.

The word, 'Al-Islam' as it appears in the verse here carries the likelihood of both meanings. If the first meaning is taken, it would mean that the only religion acceptable with Allah is Islam, that is, becoming obedient in complete submission to the commands of Allah, believing

in all prophets of all times and in whatever commandments they brought, by acting accordingly. Although, the religion brought by Ḥaḍrat Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وسلم has not been specially identified here, yet, in persuance of the general rule, once the last among the line of prophets had been sent, the belief and practice of all injunctions he brought becomes binding, and inclusive under this rule. As such, the outcome will be that the religion acceptable during the period of Sayyidnā Nūḥ was what he brought; during the period of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm, what he brought. Similarly, the Islam of the period of Sayyidnā Mūsā was what came in the form of the tablets of Torah and the teachings of Moses and the Islam of the period of Sayyidnā 'Īsā was what came as Injīl and the teachings of Jesus, عليهم السلام. At the end of this chain of prophets, the Islam of the period of Sayyidnā Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وسلم, the last among the prophets, shall be what took shape on the pattern given by the Qur'ān and Sunnah.

Now if we take the second meaning of *Islam*, that is, the Sharī'ah the way and law brought by the last of the prophets صلى الله عليه وسلم, the verse would come to mean that in this period of time only that religion of Islam which is true to the teachings of the noble prophet ﷺ is the one acceptable. No doubt, previous religions too, during their age of currency, were known as Islam, but they are now abrogated. So, the end-result is the same both ways, that is, during the age of every prophet, the religion acceptable in the sight of Allah is that particular Islam which conforms to the revelation and teachings credited to that prophet. No religion, other than this, even if it be a previously abrogated one, is acceptable and certainly not deserving of being called "Islam" at a later stage. The Sharī'ah of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm was the Islam of his times. When the time of Sayyidnā Mūsā came, the abrogated laws of that code did not remain the Islam of his time. Similarly, any laws of Moses abrogated during the time of Sayyidnā 'Īsā were not to be labelled as Islam any more. It is exactly like this when laws and injunctions of previous religious codes were abrogated during the time of the Last of the prophets ﷺ, they no more remained valid as Islam. Therefore, whatever meaning of Islam is taken, general or particular, in relation to the community being addressed by the Holy Qur'ān, the outcome of both is nothing but that, following the appearance of the noble Prophet ﷺ, the only religion which shall be deserving of the

name, *Islam*, will be the one that conforms to the Qur'ān and the teachings of the blessed recepient of revelations and that alone shall be acceptable in the sight of Allah. Since no other religion is acceptable to Allah, it cannot become a source of salvation either. This subject has appeared in the Holy Qur'ān in many verses separately. The exact words used in one such verse are: وَمَنْ يَّبْتَغِ غَيْرَ الْاِسْلَامِ دِيْنًا فَلَنْ يُّقْبَلَ مِنْهُ that is, whoever seeks a religion other than Islam, it will not be accepted from him (and what is done under its dictates shall be wasted).

Salvation in our times depends on Islam:
Even good deeds and morals from a non-Muslim are not acceptable.

These verses have very clearly hit at the root of the atheistic approach which endeavours to bracket Islam and disbelief (*kufr*) on the same footing in the name of tolerance preached by Islam, thereby claiming that every faith of the world - Judaism, Christianity, even paganism - can each become the source of salvation, on condition that its followers perform good deeds and observe good morals. This, in reality is a veiled attempt to demolish a principle of Islam and to prove that Islam is nothing of substance. It is something limpid and imaginary which could be moulded to fit into whatever religion one chooses, even if it is *kufr* or disbelief! The verses of the Holy Qur'ān, those appearing here and a large number of others, have very explicitly stressed that the light and darkness cannot be the same. Similarly, it is grossly absurd and impossible that Allah would like disobedience to and rebellion against Him just as He likes obedience and submission. Whoever denies even one basic principle of Islam, he is, without any shadow of doubt, a rebel to Allah and the enemy of His Messengers, no matter how impressing he may appear in his other deeds and formal morality. Salvation in the Hereafter depends, first of all, on obedience to Allah and His Messenger. Whoever remains deprived of it, not one of his deeds is credible. The Holy Qur'ān says for such people:

فَلَا نُقِيْمُ لَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَزْنًا

We shall not assign weight to their deeds on the Day of Judgement - 18:105.

In verse 19: وَمَا اخْتَلَفَ الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوا الْكِتَابَ اِلَّا مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَا جَآءَهُمُ الْعِلْمُ بَغْيًا ۢ بَيْنَهُمْ, after declaring that 'the religion in the sight of Allah is Islam', the text moves on

to explain why the people of the Book went about disputing the prophethood of Sayyidnā Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وسلم and challenging Islam as false. They did this, not because they had any doubts in this connection for they knew the truth of the matter through their own scriptures, but because they were scared of losing their ground against Muslims. So, it was their malice towards Muslims, their love for power and influence and their arrogant self-image as traditional leaders which drove them to these altercations.

Finally, it was said: وَمَنْ يَّكْفُرْ بِاٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ سَرِيْعُ الْحِسَابِ that is, 'whoever denies the verses of Allah (as the people of the Book did), then, Allah is swift at reckoning'. The swiftness of this reckoning can be well imagined as it starts initially soon after death when man passes into the state known as '*barzakh*'. But the detailed accounting for one's deeds shall take place on the Day of Judgement when he will have to account for his doings in the minutest detail. Then, the penchant for disputing truth will be exposed. The people who denied the truth will discover their worth and the punishment it calls for shall become known to them.

Verse 20

فَاِنْ حَآجُّوْكَ فَقُلْ اَسْلَمْتُ وَجْهِىَ لِلّٰهِ وَمَنِ اتَّبَعَنِ ۭ وَقُلْ لِّلَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوا الْكِتٰبَ وَالْاُمِّيّٖنَ ءَاَسْلَمْتُمْ ۭ فَاِنْ اَسْلَمُوْا فَقَدِ اهْتَدَوْا ۚ وَاِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَاِنَّمَا عَلَيْكَ الْبَلٰغُ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ بَصِيْرٌۢ بِالْعِبَادِ ﴿٢٠﴾

Then, if they argue with you, say: "I have submitted myself to Allah, and (so did) those who have followed me." And say to those who have been given the Book, and to the unlettered: "Do you submit?" If they submit, they will be on the right path. And if they turn back, then you have only to convey. And Allah is watchful over His servants. [20]

The Sūrah began with the confirmation of Divine Oneness and the refutation of Trinity. Answered here are argumentations in which the disbelievers and deniers among the people of the Book persist - even after the truth of Islam has been proved conclusively. The advice against such ongoing and unnecessary disputations is that the acceptance or rejection of disputers should be of no use to a believer who

simply has to declare that he and those with him have entered the fold of Islam being in no doubt about its truth. The Holy Prophet ﷺ was entrusted with the mission of calling the people of the Book, the Jews and Christians, and the disbelievers of Arabia to submit to Allah and embrace Islam which will be for their own good for they will be on the right path. In case they continue to maintain their hostile attitude, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been comforted here by saying that his duty is only limited to conveying the message of Allah and His commandments. That the message does not seem to get across to them, as they elect to reject rather than accept, should really not be a matter of concern for him. This is something Allah will take care of in His own way for He is in full sight of what His servants are doing.

Verses 21 - 22

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَكْفُرُونَ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَيَقْتُلُونَ النَّبِيِّينَ بِغَيْرِ حَقٍّ وَيَقْتُلُونَ الَّذِينَ يَأْمُرُونَ بِالْقِسْطِ مِنَ النَّاسِ فَبَشِّرْهُمْ بِعَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ ﴿٢١﴾ أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ حَبِطَتْ أَعْمَالُهُمْ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَمَا لَهُمْ مِنْ نَاصِرِينَ ﴿٢٢﴾

Surely, those who disbelieve the verses of Allah and slay the prophets unjustly and, from people, slay those who bid justice, to them give tidings of a painful punishment. [21] **Those are the ones whose deeds have gone waste in this world, and in the Hereafter, and for them there are no helpers.** [22]

In the earlier part of the Sūrah, the text mostly beamed at the Christians. In verse 20, 'those who have been given the Book' includes both Christians and Jews. Now, verses 21-22 here, talk about some of the unusual doings of Jews. Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī while commenting on this verse reports a *ḥadīth* from the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم as narrated by Ibn Abī Ḥātim. While explaining this verse, he said that Banī Isrā'īl slew forty three prophets at one and the same time. One hundred and seventy pious elders stood up asking them to uphold justice. They slew them as well on the same day. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

In verse 21, 'those who disbelieve the verses of Allah' refers to Jews who did not believe in the Injīl and the Qur'ān. 'Slay the prophets

unjustly' means that they know that they are doing so without justice. 'Those who bid justice' are people who teach moderation in deeds and morals.

Because of this whole set of their terrible deeds, verse 22 says that all their good deeds have gone waste both here and there, and when they are punished, they will find no one to assist them.

Verses 23 - 25

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا نَصِيبًا مِّنَ الْكِتٰبِ يُدْعَوْنَ إِلٰى كِتٰبِ
اللّٰهِ لِيَحْكُمَ بَيْنَهُمْ ثُمَّ يَتَوَلّٰى فَرِيقٌ مِّنْهُمْ وَهُمْ مُّعْرِضُونَ ﴿٢٣﴾
ذٰلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ قَالُوا لَنْ تَمَسَّنَا النَّارُ إِلَّآ أَيَّامًا مَّعْدُودٰتٍ ۖ وَّغَرَّهُمْ
فِي دِينِهِمْ مَّا كَانُوا يَفْتَرُونَ ﴿٢٤﴾ فَكَيْفَ إِذَا جَمَعْنٰهُمْ لِيَوْمٍ
لَّا رَيْبَ فِيهِ ۚ وَوُفِّيَتْ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَّا كَسَبَتْ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ
﴿٢٥﴾

Did you not see those who have been given a share from the Book? They are invited to the Book of Allah in order that it may decide between them. Then, a group from them goes back turning their faces away. [23] **That is because they have said: "The Fire shall not touch us except for a few days." And deceived they are in their faith by what they have been forging. [24] Then, how (will it be) when We gather them on a day in which there is no doubt, and everybody will be paid, in full, for what he has earned. And they shall not be wronged.**[25]

While dealing with the subject of Jews, as in verses 21-22, the text goes on to censure a particular claim of theirs in the present verse. The address is to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and the reference is to the Torah given to the Jews who would have found it enough for them if they were really looking forward to guidance. But they elect to be indifferent because they say and believe that the fire of Hell will not touch them except for a few days, after which, according to their supposition, they would be forgiven. This, it has been said, is self-deception caused by what they have been forging for themselves like

their belief that they were the progeny of prophets and therefore, they will escape punishment in the fire of Hell.

Jews contended that they had worshipped the calf for 40 days and so they will incur punishment, if any, for the same period only.

Verses 26 - 27

قُلِ اللّٰهُمَّ مٰلِكَ الْمُلْكِ تُؤْتِى الْمُلْكَ مَنْ تَشَآءُ وَتَنْزِعُ الْمُلْكَ مِمَّنْ تَشَآءُ وَ تُعِزُّ مَنْ تَشَآءُ وَتُذِلُّ مَنْ تَشَآءُ بِيَدِكَ الْخَيْرُ إِنَّكَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَىْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ ﴿٢٦﴾ تُوْلِجُ الَّيْلَ فِى النَّهَارِ وَ تُوْلِجُ النَّهَارَ فِى الَّيْلِ وَتُخْرِجُ الْحَىَّ مِنَ الْمَيِّتِ وَتُخْرِجُ الْمَيِّتَ مِنَ الْحَىِّ وَتَرْزُقُ مَنْ تَشَآءُ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ ﴿٢٧﴾

Say: "O Allah, O Lord of the Kingdom, You give kingdom to whom You will, and take kingdom away from whom You will; and You bestow honour on whom You will, and bring disgrace to whom You will. In your hand lies the good. You are surely powerful over everything. [26] **You make the night enter into the day, and make the day enter into the night; and You bring the living out from the dead, and bring the dead out from the living, and You give to whom You will without measure."** [27]

In these verses, Muslims have been taught and prompted to make a particular prayer which, in a subtle way, gives an indication that they are going to overpower disbelievers. This has its proof in the background in which these verses were revealed. When the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم promised that Byzantine and Persia will be taken, the hypocrites and the Jews laughed at the idea. Thereupon, this verse was revealed. [1]

Commentary
The background of Revelation:
An episode from the Battle of Khandaq

The recurring defeat of the disbelievers of Makkah at Badr and Uḥud and their general failure to register any gains in their hostility

1. Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī from al-Wāḥidī, from Ibn 'Abbās and Anas رضى الله عنهما

against Muslims coupled with the growing strength of Muslims and the rise of Islam had made them very nervous, almost reckless. The whole thing ended up in a conspiracy. The disbelievers of Arabia, the Jews and the Christians all joined in a united front against Muslims and resolved to attack Madīnah and fight a conclusive battle. This they did, determined to eradicate Islam and Muslims from the face of the earth. The battle is called 'al-Aḥzāb' in the Qur'ān, and 'Khandaq in history, because the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had decided in consultation with his Companions that a *khandaq* or trench be dug around parts of Madīnah to block the unhindered attack of the enemy during this battle.

According to narrations in al-Baihaqī, Abū Nu'aim and Ibn Khuzaimah, when the task of digging the trench was entrusted to the Islamic army, the plan was to allot the digging of a forty hand-span long trench to a group of ten men each. This trench was several miles long and fairly deep and wide, so that the enemy would find it impossible to cross over. Then, the digging had to be completed in the shortest possible time which made the noble Companions put in whatever time and energy they had in this effort, so much so that they found it difficult to leave the job and take time for even the most pressing of their needs. They were working non-stop on hungry stomachs. Surely, a modern army engineering service with its latest equipment would have not found this kind of job any easier to handle. Here, it was the power of faith which made the completion of this difficult assignment possible.

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was taking part in this digging operation as an individual like everybody else. By chance, the diggers came upon a huge rock in a certain part of the trench. Those who were assigned to dig that part of the trench tried their best to break it apart but they became helpless and gave up. They asked Sayyidnā Salmān al-Fārisī رضى الله عنه to go to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم , tell him about the problem and seek his instructions in this connection. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم immediately came at the spot, took the pickaxe in his blessed hands and struck at the rock. The rock was shattered into pieces and from it rose a streak of light which illuminated the area far and wide. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: 'In this light, I see the palaces and buildings of Hirah in the country of Persia.

He struck again and a second beam of light rose. He said: 'In this light, I was shown the red palaces and buildings of the Byzantinians.' When he struck the third time and the flame beamed its light around, he said: 'In this I was shown the great palaces of San'ā in Yemen.' Then, he said: 'I share the good news given by Jibra'īl with you that my community of Muslims will prevail over all these countries.'

When the hypocrites of Madīnah heard about it, they found an occasion to ridicule Muslims - 'just look at these people, here they are all scared of the enemy, digging trenches without eating and resting, not knowing for sure if their own lives will be safe, yet they are dreaming of running over Persia, Byzantine and Yemen!' It was in answer to a people so unfair and unjust that Allah Almighty revealed the verse:

قُلِ اللّٰهُمَّ مٰلِكَ الْمُلْكِ تُؤْتِي الْمُلْكَ مَنْ تَشَآءُ وَتَنْزِعُ الْمُلْكَ مِمَّنْ تَشَآءُ وَتُعِزُّ مَنْ تَشَآءُ وَتُذِلُّ مَنْ تَشَآءُ بِيَدِكَ الْخَيْرُ اِنَّكَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ

Say: "O Allah, O Lord of the Kingdom, You give kingdom to whom You will, and take kingdom away from whom You will; and You bestow honour on whom You will, and bring disgrace to whom You will. In Your hand lies the good. You are surely powerful over everything." (3 : 26)

Appearing in the form of a prayer, this verse so eloquently brings into focus the most perfect power of Allah as it manifests itself in the rise and fall of nations and in the revolutions that rock countries. At the same time it gives a hint that the prophecy made by the Holy Prophet ﷺ will come to pass and Persia and Byzantine will fall to Muslims. Here, enemies of Islam have been warned that they have not learnt their lesson from the rise and fall of past wielders of power for they judge events and personalities from the material angle while the truth is that all powers and governments of the world are in the hands of the most pristine power of Allah, the One in whose hands lies all honour and disgrace. There is no doubt that He is capable of making the poor and the meek sit on thrones and wrest power from kings and monarchs. Why then, should it be difficult for him to choose these ragged believers digging trenches to rule over Persia, Syria, Iraq and Yemen?

Things usually considered bad may ultimately prove not to be that bad:

Towards the end of the verse, the expression بِيَدِكَ الْخَيْرُ translated as

'in Your hand lies the good' needs some explanation. It will be noticed that in the earlier part of the verse both giving and taking of power and bestowing of honour and bringing of disgrace were mentioned side by side. It would have seemed in keeping with the occasion if the word, '*sharr*' (evil) would have been coupled with '*khair*' (good). But, the text elects to use the word, '*khair*' (good) alone and thereby points out to something real and significant in human affairs. The point worth noting is that a person or a people may regard something as unwelcome, and it may even be so for that particular person or people, but looked at from the wider angle of the whole community of nations, it may not be really evil. The Arab poet, *Mutanabbi* has put it very succinctly when he said:

مَصَائِبُ قَوْمٍ عِنْدَ قَوْمٍ فَوَائِدُ

The calamities of one group are the gains of another.

In short, the evil of things we regard as evil is partial. Looked at from its relationship to the Creator of the Universe and the Lord of all there is, and viewed in the perspective of the totality of the world of our experience, nothing is really evil or bad as such. So given the wisdom, the power and the consideration of the created universe as a whole, everything is good, '*khair*' as the verse sees sufficient to say.

The second verse (27) demonstrates that Allah controls all spaces and heavenly bodies and employs the sun and the moon to make the days longer than nights and the nights longer than the days at His will and command.

Mentioned after that is His unrivalled power of 'bringing the living out from the dead' such as, a chick from an egg, or a human infant from the sperm, or a tree from a seed and of 'bringing the dead out from the living' such as eggs from birds and beasts, sperm from humans or fruit from trees and dried grain from plants.

If we were to take 'the living' and 'the dead' in a broad and general sense, this will become inclusive of the learned and the ignorant, the perfect and the imperfect and the believer and the disbeliever (the Muslim and the *Kāfir*). It only goes to show that Allah's perfect power exercises absolute control over all phenomena, both physical and spiritual, through which He can make a Muslim out of a *Kāfir*, a perfect

believer out of a staunch disbeliever, a scholar out of an ignorant person - if He so wills. And if He so wills, He can let a believer turn into a disbeliever or a rustic into a scholar. He brought Ibrāhīm out of an idol-worshipper. He let the son of Prophet Nūḥ remain an infidel. Strange but true, the son of an *'ālim* (scholar) can remain illiterate and the son of someone illiterate can become an *'ālim*.

A discerning reader will not fail to notice the eloquent order in which Allah's most perfect power that reigns and runs the universe from the cosmos to the soul of man has been demonstrated so effectively.

The special merit of this verse:

Imām al-Baghawī reports a *ḥadīth* from the Holy Prophet ﷺ in which he said: It is Allah's promise that anyone who recites, after every Ṣalāh, the Sūrah al-Fātiḥah, Āyah al-Kursī, two verses of 'Āl-'Imrān, that is شَهِدَ اللّٰهُ أَنَّهٗ لَآ إِلٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ (2:18) and the present verse from قُلِ اللّٰهُمَّ مٰلِكَ الْمُلْكِ to بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ (26-27), He will make his abode in Paradise, and have him placed in the Sacred Enclosure, and bless him with His mercy seventy times every day, and fulfil seventy of his needs, and protect him against every envier and enemy and make him prevail over them.

Verses 28 - 30

لَا يَتَّخِذِ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ اَوْلِيَآءَ مِنْ دُوْنِ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ۚ وَمَنْ
يَّفْعَلْ ذٰلِكَ فَلَيْسَ مِنَ اللّٰهِ فِيْ شَيْءٍ اِلَّآ اَنْ تَتَّقُوْا مِنْهُمْ
تُقٰىةً ؕ وَيُحَذِّرُكُمُ اللّٰهُ نَفْسَهٗ ؕ وَاِلَى اللّٰهِ الْمَصِيْرُ ﴿۲۸﴾ قُلْ اِنْ
تُخْفُوْا مَا فِيْ صُدُوْرِكُمْ اَوْ تُبْدُوْهُ يَعْلَمْهُ اللّٰهُ ؕ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا فِي
السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِي الْاَرْضِ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ ﴿۲۹﴾
يَوْمَ تَجِدُ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَّا عَمِلَتْ مِنْ خَيْرٍ مُّحْضَرًا ۚۛ وَّمَا عَمِلَتْ
مِنْ سُوْٓءٍ ۚۛ تَوَدُّ لَوْ اَنَّ بَيْنَهَا وَبَيْنَهٗٓ اَمَدًا ۢ بَعِيْدًا ؕ وَيُحَذِّرُكُمُ اللّٰهُ
نَفْسَهٗ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ رَءُوْفٌ ۢ بِالْعِبَادِ ﴿۳۰﴾

The believers must not take the disbelievers as friends instead of the believers. And whoever does that has no relation with Allah whatsoever, unless you guard

yourselves against an apprehension from them. And Allah warns you of Himself and to Allah is the return. [28] **Say: "Whether you conceal what is in your hearts or reveal it, Allah will know it." And He knows what is in the heavens and what is in the earth. And Allah is powerful over everything.** [29] **On the day, when everybody shall find brought before him whatever good he did and whatever evil he did, he will wish that there were a long distance between him and that (day). And Allah warns you of Himself. And Allah is compassionate to (His) servants.** [30]

Commentary

In these verses, Muslims have been instructed not to take disbelievers as their friends. Those who act against this instruction have been sternly warned: Those who take them as friends will find that their bond of love and friendship with Allah has been cut off. Any emotionally involved friendship that comes from the heart is absolutely forbidden (*Harām*). However, a formal friendship at the level of mutual dealings is, no doubt, permissible; but, that too is not favoured if unnecessary.

Verses dealing with this subject have appeared at many places in the Holy Qur'ān with varying shades of meaning. It was said in Sūrah al-Mumtaḥinah:

يَآيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تَتَّخِذُوْا عَدُوِّىْ وَعَدُوَّكُمْ اَوْلِيَآءَ تُلْقُوْنَ اِلَيْهِمْ بِالْمَوَدَّةِ،

O those who believe, do not take My enemy and your enemy as friends having love for them. (60:1)

Then, towards the end it was said:

وَمَنْ يَّفْعَلْهُ مِنْكُمْ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ سَوَآءَ السَّبِيْلِ

And whoever from among you does this he has gone astray from the right path. (60:1)

Elsewhere it was said:

يَآيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تَتَّخِذُوا الْيَهُوْدَ وَالنَّصٰرٰى اَوْلِيَآءَ بَعْضُهُمْ اَوْلِيَآءُ بَعْضٍ
وَمَنْ يَّتَوَلَّهُمْ مِّنْكُمْ فَاِنَّهٗ مِنْهُمْ

O those who believe, do not take Jews or Christians as friends (for) they are friends among themselves. And whoever has friendship with them, he is one of them. (5:51)

And it appears in Sūrah al-Mujādalah:

لَا تَجِدُ قَوْمًا يُّؤْمِنُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ يُوَآدُّوْنَ مَنْ حَآدَّ اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ وَلَوْ
كَانُوْٓا اٰبَآءَهُمْ اَوْ اَبْنَآءَهُمْ اَوْ اِخْوَانَهُمْ اَوْ عَشِيْرَتَهُمْ

> You shall not find those who believe in Allah and in the Hereafter having friendship with those who have enmity with Allah and His messenger, even though they may be their fathers or sons or brothers or members of their tribe. (58:22)

Relations with disbelievers

In verses cited above and in many other verses of the Holy Qur'ān, Muslims have been strongly prevented from '*Muwālat*' with non-Muslims, that is, from indulging in relations based on love and friendship. Looking at these clear instructions, non-Muslims who are not aware of the true intention and application of this rule start thinking that the religion of Muslims does not seem to have any place for toleration or bilateral relations or even common courtesy.

On the other hand, there are a large number of verses from the Holy Qur'ān, the words and acts of the noble Prophet ﷺ, the practice of the rightly-guided *Khulafā'* and other revered Companions, which bring to light injunctions and actual modes of dealing with non-Muslims by way of favour, compassion, generosity, sympathy and concern, which has little or no parallel in world history. A superficial look on these different attitudes may sense a sort of contradiction therein. But, this feeling is a result of only a cursory study of the true teachings of the Qur'ān. If we collect all verses of the Qur'ān, relating to this subject which appear at several different places and study them all together, we shall find nothing which could bother non-Muslims nor shall there remain any doubt of contradiction in the text of the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth. With this need in view, given below is a full explanation of this point which will, hopefully, bring forth the distinction between various shades of friendship and the reality behind each of them. In addition to this, we shall also get to know what levels of friendship are permissible or impermissible and also the reasons why a certain level has been disallowed.

The truth of the matter is that there are different degrees or steps or levels in relations between two persons or groups. The first degree

of such relations comes from the heart, that of affection and love involving intense emotional commitment. This is called *Muwālāt* or close friendship. This sort of friendship is restricted to true Muslims. A Muslim is not permitted to have this kind of relationship with a non-Muslim.

The second degree is that of *Muwāsāt,* which means relationship based on sympathy, kindness and concern. It includes charitable help and support, condolence and consolation and any well-meaning attitude of wishing well. Barring disbelievers who are at war with Muslims, this kind of relationship is permissible with all other non-Muslims. A detailed explanation of this approach has appeared in Sūrah al-Mumtaḥinah (60:8) :

لَا يَنْهٰكُمُ اللّٰهُ عَنِ الَّذِيْنَ لَمْ يُقَاتِلُوْكُمْ فِى الدِّيْنِ وَلَمْ يُخْرِجُوْكُمْ مِّنْ دِيَارِكُمْ اَنْ تَبَرُّوْهُمْ وَتُقْسِطُوْٓا اِلَيْهِمْ

Allah does not forbid you from treating those who do not fight you on your faith, nor have they driven you out of your homes, with benevolence and equity.

The third degree is that of *Mudārāt* which means relations based on customary cordiality, adequacy in courtesy, pleasant and friendly behaviour and mannerly politeness. This too is permissible with all non-Muslims, specially so, when the objective is to present them with some beneficial aspect of the Faith, or when they are guests, or the purpose is to stay safe from any possible harm coming through them. The words, اِلَّآ اَنْ تَتَّقُوْا مِنْهُمْ تُقٰىةً (unless you guard yourselves against an apprehension from them) appearing in this verse mean this degree of *Mudārāt* which, in other words, means that *Muwālāt* or friendship with disbelievers is not permissible except when you are in a situation where you want to defend yourself against them. Since *Mudārāt* or sympathetic relations somewhat resemble *Muwālāt* or friendship, it was exempted from the category of *Muwālāt* . (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

The fourth degree is that of *Mu'āmalāt* or dealings. It means dealings and transactions in business or employment or wages or industry or technology. These too are permissible with non-Muslims, except when such dealings harm the general body of Muslims. The continued practice of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم , the rightly-guided *Khulafā'*

and other Companions prove it so. It is on this basis that Muslim jurists have prohibited the sale of arms to disbelievers who are at war with Muslims. However, trade and activities allied to it have been permitted. Also allowed is having them as employees or being employed in their plants and institutions.

To sum up, as for the four degrees of relations with non-Muslims, we now know that friendship which binds a Muslim in very close ties with non-Muslims is not permissible under any condition. Relations based on benevolence, humane interest and concern are permitted with all but the belligerent ones. Similarly, politeness and friendly treatment is also permissible when the purpose is to entertain a guest, convey Islamic teachings to non-Muslims or to stay safe against being hurt or harmed by them.

Now, let us look at what our noble Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, who graced this world as the universal mercy, did for non-Muslims. He demonstrated such compassion, generosity and politeness while dealing with them that it would be difficult to find its example in the world history. When Makkah was in the grip of famine, he personally went out to help his enemies who had made him leave his home town. Then, came the conquest of Makkah. All these enemies fell under his power and control. He set all of them free saying: لَا تَثْرِيْبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْيَوْمَ which means - 'Not only that you are being given amnesty this day, we are not censuring you at all for your past tyranny against us either.' When non-Muslim prisoners of war were presented before him, he treated them with such tenderness which many cannot claim to have done even in respect of their children. The disbelievers inflicted on him all sorts of injuries and pain but he never raised his hand in revenge. He did not even wish ill of them. A delegation from the tribe of Banū Thaqīf who had not embraced Islam upto that time came to visit him. They were given the honour of staying in the Mosque of the Prophet, a place regarded by Muslims as most honourable.

Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنه gave stipends and allowances to needy non-Muslim *dhimmīs*, an elegant conduct the examples of which are spread all over in the accounts of dealings credited to the rightly-guided *Khulafā'* and the noble Companions. Let us bear in mind that all these were in one or the other form of *Mu'wāsāt* (concern)

or *Mudārāt* (cordiality) or *Mu'āmalāt* (dealings). It had nothing to do with *Muwālāt* or close and intimate friendship which had been forbidden.

The aforesaid explanations clarify two things: firstly, Islam teaches its adherents all possible tolerance, decency and benevolence while dealing with non-Muslims; secondly, the superficial contradiction sensed with regard to the verse forbidding friendship with non-Muslims stands removed.

However, there is a possible question which still remains unanswered. The question is: 'Why has the Qur'ān chosen to so strongly block close friendship with disbelievers, so much so that it has not allowed it in favour of any disbeliever under any condition? What is the wisdom behind it? One of the reasons, a particular one, is that Islam does not see man existing in this world like common animals or jungle trees and blades of grass which sprout, grow, flourish and die and that is the end of it. Instead of that, man's life in this world is a purposeful life. All stages and phases of his life, that is, his eating, drinking, standing, sitting, sleeping, waking, even his living and dying, all revolve around a central purpose. As long as what he does conforms to this purpose, all he does is correct and sound. If these are against that purpose, then, they are all wrong. The poet-sage Rūmī said it so well:

زندگی از بہر ذکر و بندگی ست
بے عبادت زندگی شرمندگی ست

The purpose of life is to remember the Creator and serve Him well
Life without that devotion is nothing but shame

In his view and in the view of all right-minded people, when man abandons this purpose, he does not remain the human being he was created to be:

آنچہ می بینی خلاف آدم اند
نیستند آدم غلاف آدم اند

What you see is a crowd of anti-men
They are not men, they are just the shell of men

The Holy Qur'ān has made human beings declare this purpose as their solemn creed in the following words: قُلْ اِنَّ صَلَاتِیْ وَنُسُكِیْ وَمَحْيَایَ وَمَمَاتِیْ لِلّٰهِ

(My prayer and my sacrifice and my life and my death are all for Allah, the Lord of the Worlds." (6:162)

Now, when it stands established that the purpose of man's life is to obey and worship Allah, the Lord of the worlds, everything else including all affairs of life in this world -- business, government, politics, personal and social relations -- must invariably follow this purpose. It follows, therefore, that those who are against this purpose are the worst enemies of man. Since Satan is the foremost in this enmity, the Holy Qur'ān says: إِنَّ الشَّيْطٰنَ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ فَاتَّخِذُوْهُ عَدُوًّا، (Surely, Satan is your enemy, so take him as enemy. 35:6).

Thus, those who follow the alluring dictates of the Satan and oppose the injunctions of Allah brought by the blessed prophets عليهم السلام can hardly be the kind of people to deserve deep love and friendship based on close ties and any degree of intimacy. It is just not possible for a person who has a definite purpose in life, and who has all his friendships and enmities, agreements and disagreements subservient to this central purpose, to do something like this. The same subject has been stated in a *hadīth* from al-Bukhārī and Muslim in which the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been reported to have said: مَنْ اَحَبَّ لِلّٰهِ وَاَبْغَضَ لِلّٰهِ فَقَدِ اسْتَكْمَلَ اِيْمَانَهُ، (Whoever loves for the sake of Allah and hates for the sake of Allah alone, has perfected his faith) (Bukhārī and Muslim). From here we know that *'Īmān* or faith remains incomplete unless man subordinates his love and friendship and his hatred and enmity to Allah Almighty. Therefore, any deep emotional commitment by a true Muslim in the known forms of love and friendship has to be exclusively for one who is with him all the way in the pursuit of this noble purpose and certainly obedient to what his Lord has commanded him to do. This is why the Holy Qur'ān has, in verses cited at the beginning of the commentary, said that the one who maintains relations based on deep love and friendship with disbelievers is one of them.

The last verse (30) says that 'Allah warns you of Himself' lest you should indulge in friendship with disbelievers for the sake of fleeting interests and objectives and thus invite the anger of Allah. And since close friendship (*Muwālāt*) relates to the heart and the affairs of the heart are known to none but Allah, it is possible that a person may actually be intensely in love for and friendship with disbelievers, but

may deny it verbally. Therefore, the earlier verse (29) has already covered it by saying: "whether you conceal what is in your hearts, or disclose it, Allah shall know it." No denial or false claim is tenable before Him.

Verses 31 - 32

قُلْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُحِبُّونَ اللّٰهَ فَاتَّبِعُونِي يُحْبِبْكُمُ اللّٰهُ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ ۗ وَاللّٰهُ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿٣١﴾ قُلْ أَطِيعُوا اللّٰهَ وَالرَّسُولَ ۚ فَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَإِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْكٰفِرِينَ ﴿٣٢﴾

Say (O Prophet): "If you do love Allah, follow me; Allah shall love you and forgive you your sins. And Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful." [31]

Say: "Obey Allah and the Messenger." Then, should they turn back, Allah does not love the disbelievers." [32]

Sequence

In previous verses, there was affirmation of Allah's Oneness and the condemnation of disbelief in it. Affirmed now is the belief in prophethood as well as the necessity of following the Messenger so that we stand informed that the rejection of prophethood or refusal to obey the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is also an act of disbelief (*kufr*) like the rejection of the Oneness of Allah.

Commentary

Love is something secret. Whether or not a person loves another person, or loves less or more, are questions which cannot be answered precisely. There is no measure or yard-stick to determine the truth of the matter except that one makes an educated guess based on visible conditions and dealings, for love leaves traces and signs which could help in recognizing it as such. Now, in these verses, Allah Almighty tells those who claimed that they loved Allah and hoped to be loved by Him above the real criterion of His love. In other words, if a person living in the world of today claims that he loves his Creator and Master, then, he must test it on the touch-stone of his obedience to the Messenger, that is, match it against the frequency and quality of where and how he has been following him. Once this is done, the genuine and the fake of it will be exposed right there. How much true a person

turns out to be in his claim will be visible from how much he makes it a point to follow the noble prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم , using the guidance brought by him as the guiding force in his life. The same test will show that the weaker a person is in his claim, so equally weak he shall be in his obedience to the prophet.

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said:

> He who obeyed Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وسلم obeyed Allah and he who disobeyed Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وسلم disobeyed Allah. (Tafsīr Maẓharī, v.2)

Verses 33 - 34

إِنَّ اللّٰهَ اصْطَفٰىٓ اٰدَمَ وَنُوْحًا وَّاٰلَ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ وَاٰلَ عِمْرٰنَ عَلَى الْعٰلَمِيْنَ
﴿٣٣﴾ ذُرِّيَّةًۢ بَعْضُهَا مِنْۢ بَعْضٍ ۗ وَاللّٰهُ سَمِيْعٌ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿٣٤﴾

Verily, Allah has chosen Ādam and Nūḥ and the House of Ibrāhīm and the House of 'Imrān over the worlds, [33] **some of them being a progeny of the others. And Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.** [34]

In these verses a reference has been made to some past prophets to comfort the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم since disbelievers did not obey him because they doubted his prophethood. It is for their guidance that names of some past prophets have been cited to help remove such doubts. However, these prophets have been referred to very briefly as the main purpose is to mention Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام which follows immediately because he will come again to this world and will work with the followers of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم , therefore, it is necessary for the Muslims to know his identification.

Verses 35 - 36

اِذْ قَالَتِ امْرَاَتُ عِمْرٰنَ رَبِّ اِنِّىْ نَذَرْتُ لَكَ مَا فِىْ بَطْنِىْ
مُحَرَّرًا فَتَقَبَّلْ مِنِّىْ ۚ اِنَّكَ اَنْتَ السَّمِيْعُ الْعَلِيْمُ ﴿٣٥﴾ فَلَمَّا
وَضَعَتْهَا قَالَتْ رَبِّ اِنِّىْ وَضَعْتُهَآ اُنْثٰى ۚ وَاللّٰهُ اَعْلَمُ بِمَا
وَضَعَتْ ۗ وَلَيْسَ الذَّكَرُ كَالْاُنْثٰى ۚ وَاِنِّىْ سَمَّيْتُهَا مَرْيَمَ وَاِنِّىْٓ

أُعِيذُهَا بِكَ وَذُرِّيَّتَهَا مِنَ الشَّيْطٰنِ الرَّجِيْمِ ﴿٣٦﴾

When 'Imran's wife said: "O my Lord, I have vowed what is in my womb to be exclusively for You. So, accept (it) from me. You, certainly You, are the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing." [35]

So, when she delivered her, she said: "O my Lord, I have delivered her, a female child" - and Allah knows better what she has delivered, and the male is not like the female - "and I have named her Maryam, and I place her and her progeny under Your shelter against Satan, the rejected." [36]

Commentary:

In the religious code of earlier prophets, there was a method of worship through which a child, out of one's children, could be freed from all worldly services and devoted exclusively for Allah. Following this practice, the mother of Sayyidah Maryam made a vow during her pregnancy that she would let the newborn serve Baitul-Maqdis in the way of Allah and that she would not put the child on worldly chores. Sayyidah Maryam's mother thought that she will deliver a male child. But, when she delivered a girl, she was full of remorse thinking that a girl would not be able to do this duty. But Allah Almighty, out of His consideration for the sincerity of Sayyidah Maryam's mother, accepted that very girl and thereby made her status distinct from any other girl of the world.

From here we learn that a mother holds a certain measure of guardianship over her child in respect of his or her education and training, for Sayyidah Maryam's mother would have never vowed if the mother had no right of guardianship over her child. Similarly, it proves that a mother too has the right to give a name to her child. (al-Jaṣṣāṣ)

Verse 37

فَتَقَبَّلَهَا رَبُّهَا بِقَبُوْلٍ حَسَنٍ وَّاَنْۢبَتَهَا نَبَاتًا حَسَنًا ۙ وَّكَفَّلَهَا
زَكَرِيَّا ۚ كُلَّمَا دَخَلَ عَلَيْهَا زَكَرِيَّا الْمِحْرَابَ ۙ وَجَدَ عِنْدَهَا رِزْقًا ۚ
قَالَ يٰمَرْيَمُ اَنّٰى لَكِ هٰذَا ۭ قَالَتْ هُوَ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللّٰهِ ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ
يَرْزُقُ مَنْ يَّشَاۗءُ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ ﴿٣٧﴾

So, her Lord accepted her, a good acceptance, and made her grow, a good growth, and made Zakariyya her guardian. Whenever Zakariyya visited her in the Arch, he found with her some food. He said: "Maryam, from where has it come for you?" She said: "It is from Allah. Surely, Allah gives whom He wills without measure." [37]

Commentary

In order to fulfil her vow, Sayyidah Maryam's mother took her to the Mosque of Baitul-Maqdis and talked to the care-takers and worshippers at the Mosque, Sayyidnā Zakariyyā being one of them, and told them that she had vowed to dedicate the child in the service of God and therefore, she could not keep the child with her. She asked them to take her and keep her.

Sayyidnā 'Imrān was the Imām of this Mosque. He had died during the pregnancy of Maryam's mother, otherwise he would have been the most deserving person to have taken charge of the child, being the father and the Imām of the Mosque. Therefore, every keeper and worshipper of the Mosque wished to take her in his custody. Sayyidnā Zakariyyā pleaded his bid for custody by saying that his wife was Maryam's aunt and she being next to her mother certainly deserved to keep her. But, people did not agree to prefer him over the others. Finally, everybody agreed to draw lots, which turned out to be fairly strange as it would appear later. Here too, it was Sayyidnā Zakariyyā عليه السلام who turned out to be the winner.

So, he got custody of Maryam. According to some reports, he employed a wet-nurse to have her suckled. Other reports say that she just did not need to be suckled. She grew up able to sit and walk and Sayyidnā Zakariyyā عليه السلام put her in a good house adjacent to the Mosque. When he went out, he locked the house and opened it on return. This has been stated briefly in the present verse.

Verse 38

هُنَالِكَ دَعَا زَكَرِيَّا رَبَّهٗ ۚ قَالَ رَبِّ هَبْ لِيْ مِنْ لَّدُنْكَ ذُرِّيَّةً طَيِّبَةً ۚ اِنَّكَ سَمِيْعُ الدُّعَآءِ ﴿۳۸﴾

Thereupon, Zakariyyā prayed to his Lord. He said: "O

my Lord, grant me from Your own (power) a goodly progeny. Verily, You are the listener of the prayer." [38]

Commentary

1. While looking at the first sentence of this verse - هُنَالِكَ دَعَا زَكَرِيَّا رَبَّهُ (Thereupon, Zakariyyā prayed to his Lord) - we should bear in mind that Sayyidnā Zakariyyā had no offspring upto that time. He had grown old and one usually does not have children in that age, although he firmly believed that Allah, in His ultimate power, could change the usual phenomenon and bless him with an offspring even at his advanced age. But he had not personally witnessed the unusual divine acts - such as he did when he saw unusual and out-of-season eatables provided for Sayyidah Maryam - and that was why he did not have the courage to extend his hand of prayer for an offspring. Now when he saw the miracle with his own eyes, he was persuaded for such prayer under the belief that Allah, who can provide a servant with out-of-season fruits, would also bless him with an offspring, even in this late age, and so he prayed.

2. The second sentence of the verse - قَالَ رَبِّ هَبْ لِيْ مِنْ لَّدُنْكَ ذُرِّيَّةً طَيِّبَةً: 'He said: "O my Lord, grant me from Your own (power) a goodly progeny."' - tells us that making prayers to have children is a blessed practice of the prophets and the righteous.

In another verse Allah Almighty has said: وَلَقَدْ اَرْسَلْنَا رُسُلًا مِّنْ قَبْلِكَ وَجَعَلْنَا لَهُمْ اَزْوَاجًا وَّذُرِّيَّةً: "And We sent messengers before you and provided them with wives and children"- (13:38). It means that children are among the blessings of Allah which were bestowed on the Holy Prophet ﷺ as well as on other prophets.

Now, should someone try to stop the birth of children, by any means, he will not only rebel against nature but will also deprive himself of having acted in harmony with the common and agreed practice of prophets علیہم السلام. The Holy Prophet of Islam صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم has given great importance to the question of marriage and children, so much so that he did not allow anyone to avoid married life and children inspite of his capability, and refused to take such a person as a member of his community of followers. He said:

(۱) اَلنِّكَاحُ مِنْ سُنَّتِيْ

(٢) فَمَنْ رَغِبَ عَنْ سُنَّتِيْ فَلَيْسَ مِنِّيْ
(٣) تَزَوَّجُوا الْوَدُوْدَ الْوَلُوْدَ فَإِنِّيْ مُكَاثِرٌ بِكُمُ الْأُمَمَ

(1) Marriage is my *sunnah* (way).

(2) So, whoever turns away from my *sunnah*, he is not from me.

(3) Therefore, marry a woman who is loving and fertile, for I shall compete with other communities on the basis of your numbers.

In another verse, Allah Almighty praises those who pray before Him to have a wife in marriage, have children and have them grow good and righteous. He says:

وَالَّذِيْنَ يَقُوْلُوْنَ رَبَّنَا هَبْ لَنَا مِنْ اَزْوَاجِنَا وَذُرِّيّٰتِنَا قُرَّةَ اَعْيُنٍ

And those who say: "O our Lord, bless us with such among our wives and our children as be the delight of our eyes. (25:74)

Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, رحمه الله, says that the Qur'ānic expression - *'qurrata a'yun'* (literally: coolness or lustre of the eyes; meaning someone dearly loved and cherished) - here means that the maker of prayer sees his children and wife devoted in obedience to Allah.

It appears in a *ḥadīth* that Umm Sulaym رضی الله عنها requested the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم to pray for his attendant, Sayyidnā Anas. He made the following prayer for him:

اَللّٰهُمَّ اَكْثِرْ مَالَهٗ وَ وَلَدَهٗ وَ بَارِكْ لَهٗ فِيْمَا اَعْطَيْتَهٗ

O Allah, increase his wealth and his children and make him prosper in what You have bestowed on him.

It was the outcome of this very prayer that Sayyidnā Anas رضی الله عنه had about a hundred children and was also blessed with an ample measure of wealth.

Verse 39

فَنَادَتْهُ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ وَهُوَ قَآئِمٌ يُّصَلِّيْ فِي الْمِحْرَابِ ۙ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ يُبَشِّرُكَ بِيَحْيٰى مُصَدِّقًاۢ بِكَلِمَةٍ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَ سَيِّدًا وَّحَصُوْرًا وَّنَبِيًّا مِّنَ الصّٰلِحِيْنَ ﴿٣٩﴾

So then, the angels called out to him, while he stood

praying in the Arch, saying: "Allah gives you the good news of Yaḥyā (John) who shall come to confirm a word of Allah and shall be a chief, abstinent (from women), a prophet and one of the righteous." [39]

Commentary

1. The expression, كَلِمَةُ اللّٰهِ : 'a word of Allah' refers to Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام. This term is used for him because he was created, in an unusual manner, simply by the will and command of Allah - without a paternal linkage.

2. The second quality of Sayyidnā Yaḥyā has been described by the word, '*ḥaṣūr*' translated here as 'abstinent'. It means that he was very particular about keeping himself shielded from temptations, that is, from things one habitually enjoys. When we say one abstains from enjoyments of life, the statement includes abstinence even from fulfilling the desires of things allowed, for example, good food, good dress and marital life and things like these. Since the quality of abstinence has been mentioned here in a positive frame of reference, it obviously seems to suggest that this is the better way, although *aḥadīth* prove the higher merit of living in the bond of marriage. In this situation, the considered opinion is that one whose condition is similar to that of Sayyidnā Yaḥyā عليه السلام and who is so absorbed in the thought of his life-to-come that he feels no need to have a wife nor has the time and frame of mind to fulfil the rights of his wife and children, then, for such a person this is the better choice. It is because of this particular reason that *aḥadīth* which describe the merit of marriage come up with a restrictive clause as well, that is, مَنِ اسْتَطَاعَ مِنْكُمُ الْبَاءَةَ which means that one who can marry and is capable of fulfilling the due rights of his wife, should marry, for this is better for him; otherwise, he is not advised to marry. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

Verses 40 - 41

قَالَ رَبِّ اَنّٰى يَكُوْنُ لِىْ غُلٰمٌ وَّقَدْ بَلَغَنِىَ الْكِبَرُ وَامْرَاَتِىْ
عَاقِرٌ ؕ قَالَ كَذٰلِكَ اللّٰهُ يَفْعَلُ مَا يَشَآءُ ﴿۴۰﴾ قَالَ رَبِّ اجْعَلْ
لِّىْٓ اٰيَةً ؕ قَالَ اٰيَتُكَ اَلَّا تُكَلِّمَ النَّاسَ ثَلٰثَةَ اَيَّامٍ اِلَّا رَمْزًا ؕ وَاذْكُرْ

رَبَّكَ كَثِيرًا وَّسَبِّحْ بِالْعَشِيِّ وَالْإِبْكَارِ ﴿٤١﴾ ع

He said: "O my Lord, how shall I have a boy when old age has come upon me and my wife is barren?" Said He: "That is how Allah does what He wills." [40]

He said: "O my Lord, set for me a sign." Said He: "Your sign is that you shall not be able to speak to people for three days except through gestures. And remember your Lord much and proclaim His purity at evening and at morning." [41]

Commentary

We have already seen that Sayyidnā Zakariyyā عليه السلام believed in the absolute power of Allah and had seen its manifestation repeatedly and that he had himself made the prayer and knew of its acceptance as well, what then, did he mean by asking: 'how shall I have a boy?' The truth of the matter is that the question asked by him was not because of any doubt in the absolute power of Allah. Quite contrary to this, the purpose of the question was to find out the state in which this was to happen: whether the present extreme old age of both of them would remain just as it was, or would that state be changed. The eloquent reply given in كَذٰلِكَ اللّٰهُ يَفْعَلُ مَا يَشَآءُ (That is how Allah does what He wills) makes it clear that they were to remain at the same age and that they would have an offspring in that very state. This resolves any doubt that may be entertained at this point. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

2. With reference to verse 41, Sayyidnā Zakariyyā's purpose behind requesting a sign (of pregnancy) was to be happy at the prospect and thus be enabled to show their gratitude all along even prior to the actual birth of the child. So, Allah gave him the sign stated above.

The sign given was remarkably suitable to its purpose. His request for a sign was prompted by his wish to show his gratefulness. Now, the sign set for him leaves him incapable of doing anything but this. Even a hundred signs would have not done what this one sign did and, of course, the noble purpose he had on his mind was all too well-accomplished. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

3. The last phrase: إِلَّا رَمْزًا (except through gestures) in this verse tells us that in a situation where speech is not possible because of a

valid reason, gesture would be deemed as its substitute. Consequently, it appears in a *ḥadīth* that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم asked a maid-servant: اين الله ('Where is Allah?'). She pointed out towards the sky. He said: 'This maid-servant is a Muslim.' (al-Qurṭubī)

Verses 42 - 43

وَإِذْ قَالَتِ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ يٰمَرْيَمُ إِنَّ اللّٰهَ اصْطَفٰكِ وَطَهَّرَكِ وَاصْطَفٰكِ عَلٰى نِسَآءِ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿٤٢﴾ يٰمَرْيَمُ اقْنُتِىْ لِرَبِّكِ وَ اسْجُدِىْ وَارْكَعِىْ مَعَ الرّٰكِعِيْنَ ﴿٤٣﴾

And when the angels said: "O Maryam, Allah has chosen you and purified you and chosen you over the women of all the worlds. [42] **O Maryam, stand in devotion to your Lord, and prostrate and bow down with those who bow."** [43]

Commentary

1. In verse 42, the sentence: وَاصْطَفٰكِ عَلٰى نِسَآءِ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ (and has chosen you over women of all the worlds) refers to all women in that period of time. Therefore, the statement سَيِّدَةُ نِسَآءِ أَهْلِ الْجَنَّةِ فَاطِمَة (Fatimah is the foremost among women of the Paradise) appearing in *ḥadīth* does not contradict it.

2. It will be noticed that, in the last sentence of verse 43: وَارْكَعِىْ مَعَ الرّٰكِعِيْنَ (and bow down with those who bow) while giving an order to bow down, the imperative has been qualified with the words "with those who bow"- but no such qualification appears while giving an order of prostration. This apparently seems to hint that people generally do not observe due concern while making *rukū'* (bowing). They tend to bend a little, then resume the standing position (as if in a hurry). This kind of *rukū'* (bowing) is closer to standing (*qiyām*). As said earlier, it apparently seems to suggest that Allah Almighty, by mentioning the qualification 'those who bow', has given a model to be followed so that one's bowing in prayer could become similar to those who bow fully and perfectly as due.

Verse 44

ذٰلِكَ مِنْ أَنْبَآءِ الْغَيْبِ نُوْحِيْهِ إِلَيْكَ ؕ وَمَا كُنْتَ لَدَيْهِمْ إِذْ يُلْقُوْنَ

أَقْلَامَهُمْ أَيُّهُمْ يَكْفُلُ مَرْيَمَ ۖ وَمَا كُنتَ لَدَيْهِمْ إِذْ يَخْتَصِمُونَ ﴿٤٤﴾

This is a part of the news of the unseen We reveal to you. And you were not with them when they were casting their pens (to decide) who from among them should be the guardian of Maryam, nor were you with them when they were quarreling. [44]

Commentary

This verse presents an argument to prove the prophethood of Sayyidnā Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وسلم by referring to happenings in the lives of Sayyidnā Zakariyyā and Sayyidah Maryam عليهما السلام . These took place in the remote past and there is no likelihood of their being seen or heard or read, specially so, by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم , which by itself proves that his being so informed of the unknown was beyond the ordinary course of learning. He had just no way of finding out such details by any obvious means at his command. Hence, the truth is that this information was revealed to him as part of the message he gave to others. The text very eloquently states that the Holy Prophet ﷺ was not there to see them drawing lots (by throwing their reed pens in water, based on prior agreement that the owner of the pen which flows against the current shall be the winner), nor was he present on the scene when they were initially quarreling about the custody of Maryam before agreeing upon the drawing of lots.

The rule governing *Qur'ah* (قرعة) (to the drawing of lots) according to Ḥanafī jurists, is that *Qur'ah* (drawing of lots) cannot be given a decisive role in determining the rights known and fixed in Islamic Law. Drawing lots in such a situation is included under *Qimār* (gambling). For example, if something is jointly owned by several persons and a lot is drawn to decide that the one whose name comes out in the lot shall take the whole thing; or, in the case of a child whose parentage is disputed, a lot is drawn and the one whose name comes out in the lot drawn is taken to be the father. Drawing lots in such cases is not allowed in Shari'ah. As for rights which depend upon opinion, *Qur'ah* is permissible in them, for instance, while alloting portions of a joint property, A is given the eastern portion and B, the western, by drawing a lot. This is permissible because this was permissible even without having to draw lots by a mutual agreement of the parties con-

cerned or by a decree of a judge. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

In other words, it can be said that in a situation where the rights of all parties are equal and the purpose of the lot is only to allocate equal portions to each of them and to decide as to which portion is for whom, then drawing a lot is permissible.

Verses 45 - 46

إِذْ قَالَتِ الْمَلَٰٓئِكَةُ يَٰمَرْيَمُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُبَشِّرُكِ بِكَلِمَةٍ مِّنْهُ اسْمُهُ الْمَسِيحُ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ وَجِيهًا فِى الدُّنْيَا وَالْءَاخِرَةِ وَمِنَ الْمُقَرَّبِينَ ﴿٤٥﴾ وَيُكَلِّمُ النَّاسَ فِى الْمَهْدِ وَكَهْلًا وَمِنَ الصَّٰلِحِينَ ﴿٤٦﴾

When the angels said: "O Maryam, Allah gives you the good news of a word from Him whose name is Masīḥ 'Īsā, the son of Maryam (the Messiah Jesus, son of Mary) a man of status in this world and in the Hereafter and one of the nearest. [45] **And he shall speak to the people in the cradle as well as in the middle age, and shall be one of the righteous."** [46]

The previous verse (44) appeared parenthetically between the present verses 45 - 46 and verses 42 - 43 and the purpose was to affirm the prophethood of Sayyidnā Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وسلم . The present verse resumes with the story of Sayyidah Maryam which actually prepares the ground for a fuller account of the birth, mission and miracles of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام .

Commentary

One of the qualities of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام mentioned in this verse is that 'he shall speak in the cradle' which means that he will speak while still a child, although no child has the ability to do so. When soon after the birth of infant Jesus, as mentioned in another verse, people chided Sayyidah Maryam on the basis of a false accusation, this new-born infant, Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام spoke up, saying: انى عبدالله (I am a servant of Allah). Then following immediately, it was said that he will also talk to people when he will be in the later middle of his age (*kahl*). It is worth noting here that the incidence of speaking in infancy was certainly a sign and a miracle and it is quite appropriate to mention it at this point. But, speaking to people during one's middle age is very normal, something everyone does no matter whether he is

a Muslim, or a non-Muslim, learned or illiterate. Why has this been mentioned here as something special? What could it mean?

One answer to this question appears in Bayān al-Qur'ān by Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thānavī who says that the real purpose here is to particularly focus on the miraculous nature of meaningful infant speech. The reference to the speech in the middle age is there to indicate that his childhood speech too would not be the usual baby-talk, rather it would be rational, even learned and eloquent, as man does in his advanced years. If we were to look into the true historical background of Sayyidnā 'Īsā, we would discover that this reference to him as speaking to people in his middle age provides a great standing argument in favour of the Islamic position which, according to the Qur'anic belief, is that Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام has been raised alive onto the heavens.

Ḥadīth narrations prove that Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام, while so raised, was in the approximate age bracket of 30-35 years which is youth at its best. Middle age, *kahl* in Arabic, was something he never reached during his life in this world. So, his talking to people in his middle age can happen only when he were to grace this world once again with his presence. Therefore, the way his childhood speech was a miracle, his speech in the middle age could be nothing else but another miracle.

Verse 47

قَالَتْ رَبِّ أَنّٰى يَكُوْنُ لِيْ وَلَدٌ وَّلَمْ يَمْسَسْنِيْ بَشَرٌ ۗ قَالَ كَذٰلِكِ اللّٰهُ
يَخْلُقُ مَا يَشَآءُ ۗ إِذَا قَضٰٓى أَمْرًا فَإِنَّمَا يَقُوْلُ لَهٗ كُنْ فَيَكُوْنُ ﴿٤٧﴾

She said: "O my Lord, how shall I have a son while no human has ever touched me?" Said He: "That is how Allah creates what He wills." When He decides a matter, He simply says to it "Be", and it happens." [47]

The glad tidings given by the angel (verse 46) regarding the birth of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام without a father surprised Sayyidah Maryam as she was a virgin. She wondered how would it happen. Would that be a Divine miracle or would she be asked to marry a man? The Divine answer eliminates the latter possibility. Not restricted by it, 'Allah creates what He wills', that is, His will is all sufficient to bring something into existence. He needs no medium or cause. It is only His com-

mand "be" which makes things come into existence.

Verses 48 - 51

وَيُعَلِّمُهُ الْكِتٰبَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَالتَّوْرٰىةَ وَالْاِنْجِيْلَ ﴿٤٨﴾ وَرَسُوْلًا
اِلٰى بَنِيْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ ۙ اَنِّيْ قَدْ جِئْتُكُمْ بِاٰيَةٍ مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ ۙ اَنِّيْٓ اَخْلُقُ
لَكُمْ مِّنَ الطِّيْنِ كَهَيْـَٔةِ الطَّيْرِ فَاَنْفُخُ فِيْهِ فَيَكُوْنُ طَيْرًا ۢ بِاِذْنِ
اللّٰهِ ۚ وَاُبْرِئُ الْاَكْمَهَ وَالْاَبْرَصَ وَاُحْيِ الْمَوْتٰى بِاِذْنِ اللّٰهِ ۚ
وَاُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا تَاْكُلُوْنَ وَمَا تَدَّخِرُوْنَ ۙ فِيْ بُيُوْتِكُمْ ۭ اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ
لَاٰيَةً لَّكُمْ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُّؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿٤٩﴾ وَمُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيَّ مِنَ
التَّوْرٰىةِ وَلِاُحِلَّ لَكُمْ بَعْضَ الَّذِيْ حُرِّمَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَجِئْتُكُمْ بِاٰيَةٍ
مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ ۣ فَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَاَطِيْعُوْنِ ﴿٥٠﴾ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ رَبِّيْ وَرَبُّكُمْ
فَاعْبُدُوْهُ ۭ هٰذَا صِرَاطٌ مُّسْتَقِيْمٌ ﴿٥١﴾

And He shall teach him the Book and the Wisdom, and the Torah and the Injil, [48] **and (shall make him) a messenger to the Children of Isra'il (who will say to them): "I have come to you with a sign from your Lord, that is, I create for you from clay something in the shape of a bird, then I blow in it, and it becomes a living bird with the will of Allah; and I cure the born-blind and the leper and I cause the dead to become alive with the will of Allah; and I tell you of what you eat and what you store in your homes. In it there is surely a sign for you, if you are believers."** [49]

"And (I have come to you) confirming what is before me, the Torah, and to make permissible for you some of what was prohibited to you. And I have come to you with a sign from your Lord. So, fear Allah and obey me. [50] **Allah is surely my Lord and your Lord. So, worship Him. This is the straight path."** [51]

1. Verse 48 recounts the august virtues of Sayyidna 'Isa who would be born blessed with the honour of learning from Allah: Scriptures, Wisdom and specially the Torah and the Injil; and that he will be sent as a Messenger of Allah to all of the Children of Isra'il.

2. The message he will carry to them will be his argument in favour of his prophethood. In order that they believe, enumerated in verse 49, there are four signs or miracles that he would perform, being enough for willing believers.

3. Verse 50 says that Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام will declare that he has come to confirm Torah which was revealed before his coming and to make lawful what remained unlawful for them in the law of Moses. This means that the unlawfulness of some things in the earlier code would stand abrogated by the new one, (that of Sayyidnā 'Īsā) whose station of prophethood was the conclusive argument for that claim of abrogation. The proof of his truth were the signs from their Lord.

4. Once his prophethood is established, verse 51 states that Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام will ask them to beware of any contravention of Divine commandments, fear Allah, and follow his teachings in matters of religion which, in a nutshell, are that 'Allah is my Lord and your Lord' (the ultimate in belief) and 'Worship Him' (the ultimate in deeds). This, then, is the straight path which helps perfect the ideal combination of beliefs and deeds, leads to the way of salvation and is the source of communion with Allah.

Ruling:

Making the shape of a bird was the making of a picture, something permitted in that Sharī'ah. In our Sharī'ah, its permissibility was abrogated.

Verses 52 - 53

فَلَمَّآ اَحَسَّ عِيۡسٰى مِنۡهُمُ الۡكُفۡرَ قَالَ مَنۡ اَنۡصَارِیۡۤ اِلَى اللّٰهِ ؕ
قَالَ الۡحَـوَارِيُّوۡنَ نَحۡنُ اَنۡصَارُ اللّٰهِ ۚ اٰمَنَّا بِاللّٰهِ ۚ وَاشۡهَدۡ بِاَنَّا
مُسۡلِمُوۡنَ ﴿٥٢﴾ رَبَّنَاۤ اٰمَنَّا بِمَاۤ اَنۡزَلۡتَ وَاتَّبَعۡنَا الرَّسُوۡلَ فَاكۡتُبۡنَا
مَعَ الشّٰهِدِيۡنَ ﴿٥٣﴾

So, when 'Īsā sensed disbelief in them, he said: "Who are my helpers in the way of Allah?" The disciples said: "We are helpers of Allah. We believe in Allah; and be witness that we are Muslims." [52]

"Our Lord, we have believed in what You have re-

vealed, and we have followed the messenger. So, write us down with those who bear witness." [53]

Following blessed predictions mentioned earlier, Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام was born with all promised signs. As a messenger sent to Banī Isrā'īl, he presented his call to them supported by miracles to prove his prophethood. But, the Banī Isrā'īl were adamant and kept on rejecting him as a prophet, even going to the limit of being physically hostile to him.

The text now identifies the very first followers of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام, brings to light their real creed, expressed first before their prophet and then (in verse 53), reiterated it in the form of a prayer before their Lord.

Commentary

The word, '*ḥawāriyy* (singular of '*al-ḥawāriyyūn*') appearing in verse 52 (translated as 'the disciples'), is a derivation from *ḥawār* which lexically means whiteness. In the religious terminology, the title of '*ḥawāriyy*' has been given to the sincere disciples or companions of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام either because of their sincerity or the purity of their heart, or because of their white dress. Likewise, the Companions of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم have been called, *ṣaḥābiyy* (plural, *saḥābah*).

Some commentators have given the number of the disciples as twelve. Incidentally, the word '*ḥawāriyy*' is also, at times, used in the absolute sense of 'helper' or 'supporter'. It is in this very sense that it was said in a *ḥadīth:* "Every prophet has a *ḥawāriyy*, that is, a sincere companion; Zubair is my *ḥawāriyy*' (Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī)

An Important Note:

Verse 52 states that Sayyidnā 'Īsā looked for helpers in the way of Allah only when he sensed hostility from disbelievers, and not at the initial stage of his call. As obvious, he had risen to the task all alone obeying the command of his Lord without worrying about setting up a 'party' in advance. When came the need, he found a group around him. A little thought here would show that every worthy mission demands such determination and courage.

Verses 54 - 55

وَ مَكَرُوْا وَمَكَرَ اللّٰهُ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ خَيْرُ الْمٰكِرِيْنَ ﴿۵۴﴾ اِذْ قَالَ اللّٰهُ يٰعِيْسٰٓى اِنِّىْ مُتَوَفِّيْكَ وَرَافِعُكَ اِلَىَّ وَمُطَهِّرُكَ مِنَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا وَجَاعِلُ الَّذِيْنَ اتَّبَعُوْكَ فَوْقَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْٓا اِلٰى يَوْمِ الْقِيٰمَةِ ۚ ثُمَّ اِلَىَّ مَرْجِعُكُمْ فَاَحْكُمُ بَيْنَكُمْ فِيْمَا كُنْتُمْ فِيْهِ تَخْتَلِفُوْنَ ﴿۵۵﴾

And they made a move, and Allah made a move. And Allah is the best of those who make moves. [54]
When Allah said: "O 'Īsā, I am to take you in full and raise you towards Myself, and cleanse you of those who disbelieve, and place those who follow you above those who disbelieve, upto the Day of Doom. Then to Me is your return, whereupon I shall judge between you in what you have been differing in." [55]

Commentary

In these verses the miraculous event of the Ascension of Sayyidnā 'Īsā (Jesus Christ) has been mentioned. "And they made a move" refers to the evil designs of the Jews who planned to arrest him and to get him crucified.

The next sentence i.e. "and Allah made a move" refers to the plan designed by Allah Almighty to save his prophet 'Īsā from their ill designs. They sent one of them to Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام to arrest him and Allah changed his face totally and made him resemble Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام and raised Sayyidnā 'Īsā to heavens, while that person was crucified under the mistaken identity. How Allah had planned to save 'Īsā عليه السلام from their clutches was disclosed to him when his enemies came to arrest him. The details of these disclosures have been mentioned in verse 55.

Explanation of important words in the verse

Some sects which deny, contrary to the belief of the entire Muslim community, the Ascension of Sayyidnā 'Īsā (Jesus Christ), his being alive in the heavens and his descension towards the later times, have

worked through the words and meanings of these verses to open doors of distortion in the Qur'anic text. Therefore, it seems appropriate that these words be explained in some details.

Let us begin with وَاللّٰهُ خَيْرُ الْمٰكِرِيْنَ translated as 'and Allah is the best of those who make moves'. The word, *makr* in Arabic denotes a subtle and secret move or plan. If this is for a good purpose, it is good; and if this is for a bad purpose, it is bad. It was why the restriction of *saiyy* (سیئ : evil) was placed with *makr* (مکر: move, plan) in: وَلَا يَحِيْقُ الْمَكْرُ السَّيِّئُ اِلَّا بِاَهْلِهٖ (And evil plan besets none but its perpetrator - 35:43).

The Qur'anic word, *makr,* is used exclusively for conspiracy, evil plan and strategy in the everyday idiom of the Urdu language (in which this commentary was originally written), therefore, it should not be equated with the Arabic usage. This is the reason why Allah has been called: خَيْرُ الْمٰكِرِيْنَ : '*Khair al-Mākirīn*' here.

The verse means that the Jews started making a series of conspiracies and secret schemes against Sayyidnā 'Īsā علیہ السلام going to the limit of convincing the ruler of the time that he was a heretic (God forbid) all bent upon changing the Torah and was going to make apostates of everybody. The ruler ordered the arrest of Sayyidnā 'Īsā. While this was the scene on one side, the subtle and secret move made by Allah Almighty was countering their evil plans more effectively, which has been mentioned in the verses coming next.

The word, '*Mutawaffi*' in اِنِّیْ مُتَوَفِّيْكَ takes '*tawaffī*' as its verbal noun with its root being '*wafyun.*' Lexically, the word means 'to take in full'. This being its real meaning, its derivations *wafā, īfā'* and '*istīfā*' are used to convey that sense. In fact, the real meaning of *tawaffī* is 'to take in full' which is universally confirmed by all lexicons of the Arabic language. Since man completes his appointed time at the hour of death and the spirit or soul given by Allah is taken back fully and conclusively, it is in that context that this word is also used figuratively in the sense of death. A simple form of death is the daily sleep of human beings. For this too, the Holy Qur'ān uses the same word when it says:

اَللّٰهُ يَتَوَفَّى الْاَنْفُسَ حِيْنَ مَوْتِهَا وَ الَّتِيْ لَمْ تَمُتْ فِيْ مَنَامِهَا

'Allah takes away lives of the living at the time of their death and of those that do not die, in their sleep'. (39:42)

Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Taimiyyah says in *al-Jawāb al-Ṣaḥīḥ* (v. 2, p. 83):

التوفى فى لغة العرب معناها القبض والا ستيفاء وذلك ثلاثة انواع، أحدها التوفى فى النوم، والثانى توفى الموت، والثالث توفى الروح والبدن جميعًا

Al-tawaffī, in the Arabic language, means: to exact fully or take in full. It takes three forms; the first: to take in sleep; the second: to take in death; and the third: to take the soul and the body all together.

In Kulliyāt Abū al-Baqā', it is said:

التوفى الاماتة وقبض الروح، وعليه استعمال العامة او الاستيفاء واخذ الحق وعليه استعمال البلغاء

Al-tawaffī is putting to death and exacting of the soul in common usage while, in the classical usage, it is taking in full and the exacting of the due right.

Therefore, the majority of scholars have translated the word, متوفيك: '*mutawaffika*' in the verse under study in the sense of 'taking in full'. This means that Allah will not leave Sayyidnā 'Īsā in the hands of the Jews, rather He would take him away which would be in the form that he would be risen unto Him in the heavens.

This is how the words 'I am to take you in full' have been interpreted by the majority of the scholars. However, some authentic commentators of the Holy Qur'ān have interpreted these words in the sense of 'giving death' also, but they do not mean that the death of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام will occur at the hands of his enemies. The true meaning of the verse, according to these commentators is as follows:

Allah Almighty said two things to comfort Jesus at a time when the Jews were bent on killing him. One: That his death will come, not at their hands in the form of killing, but that it would be a natural death. Two: In order to rescue him from the evil designs of those people, Allah Almighty will, at that time, raise Jesus towards Him. This explanation is exactly what has been reported from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه as quoted by al-Suyūṭī in his al-Durr al-Manthūr v. 2, p. 36 on the authority of several narrators.

The gist of this *tafsīr* or explanation is that *tawaffī* does mean giving death, but there is the element of precedence and sequence in the words used. The fact of رَافِعُكَ (I shall raise you) will come first and that of مُتَوَفِّيكَ (I shall give you death) later. Now at this point, the wisdom behind mentioning the phenomenon of the earlier lies in the hint that it gives about the events which are to come later on. It means that raising towards Allah will not last for ever; it would be temporary and then, he would return to the mortal world and prevail over enemies and later on, death will come to him in a natural way.

Thus, the event of his return from heaven and his death after having established his victory in the world was not only a miracle but a consummation of the honour and integrity of Jesus, عليه السلام. In addition to that, the unfounded Christian belief in the divinity of Jesus was also refuted. Had it not been so, the event of Jesus being raised towards the heavens alive would have further strengthened their false belief that he too was Living and Eternal like Allah. Therefore, by introducing the word مُتَوَفِّيكَ (pointing out to his death) first, all those misconceptions which might have arisen from 'raising of Jesus' have been refuted in advance.

The reality is that disbelievers and polytheists have always been vehemently opposed to prophets, عليهم السلام. And parallel to that there has been the customary practice of Allah - when a people unto whom a prophet has been sent stick to their own opinion, do not listen to the prophet and do not believe in him even after having witnessed the miracles, then, one of the following two counter-actions were taken: Either those people were annihilated through some natural calamity as was done with 'Ād and Thamūd and the peoples of Prophets Lūṭ and Ṣāliḥ عليهم السلام ; or, alternatively Allah would instruct His prophet to migrate from the habitat of disbelievers and go to some other place. It was there that they were provided with such power and glory that they finally achieved victory against the people whom they were sent to. For example Prophet Ibrāhīm, عليه السلام migrated from Iraq and sought refuge in Syria. Similarly, Prophet Mūsā (Moses) عليه السلام, migrated from Egypt and came to Madyan. Finally, the Last prophet, Muḥammad ﷺ migrated from Makkah and came to Madīnah. It was from there that he finally attacked Makkah and conquered it. This raising of Jesus to

the heavens to outmaneuver the threatening designs of the Jews was, in fact, an act of emigration in its own way following which he would return to this world and achieve total victory over the Jews.

Now comes the question as to why this emigration of his, quite separate from the rest, has the heavens as the destination? So, for that matter, Allah Almighty has Himself said about him that his case is like that of Ādam, عليه السلام . The way in which Ādam's birth differs from the normal birth of the rest of creation, (i.e., without a father and a mother) so it is that the birth of Jesus took a miraculous form different from the normal birth of human beings; and his death too, taking a unique and unmatched form, will materialize after hundreds of years following his return to the world -- unprecedented indeed. Why then, should one be surprised if his emigration too follows some such unique pattern?

These marvels of nature led the ignorant among Christians into believing and declaring that he was God, while deliberation into the various aspects of these very marvels, are clear proofs of his servitude as a human being to God, obedience to the Divine will and the demonstration of human traits. It is for this reason that the Holy Qur'ān has made a pointed reference to the refutation of belief in the Godhood of Jesus on all such occasions. The raising towards the heavens would have made this doubt all the more strong. Therefore, by bringing the word *mutawaffīka* (I am to take you in full) earlier, this doubt was totally eliminated. Thus we come to realize that this verse, no doubt, aims at negating the Jewish plans since they were all set to crucify and kill Jesus, عليه السلام, and that Allah Almighty made their plans come to nothing. Moreover, this precedence and sequence of words became the mode of refuting the Christians as well, that Jesus was no God who was never to die but that a time will come when he too will meet his death.

In his Tafsīr Imām al-Rāzī has said that such precedence and sequence occurs frequently in the noble Qur'ān in order to cover similar expedient considerations under which an event due later has been mentioned first while an event due earlier has been placed after that. (al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr, v. 2, p. 48)

As for وَرَافِعُكَ إِلَيَّ (And I shall raise you towards Me), the meaning is clear. Addressing Jesus here, it has been said: 'I shall raise you to-

wards Me'. Every one knows that Jesus is not the name of just the spirit but that of the spirit and the body of Jesus. Now taking the raising of Jesus in the sense that the act of raising was spiritual only, and not physical, is all wrong. As far as the word, *raf'* (رفع : raising) is concerned, there are occasions when it is also used to indicate raising of ranks as it appears in the following verses of the noble Qur'an:

رَفَعَ بَعْضَكُمْ فَوْقَ بَعْضٍ دَرَجَاتٍ

... And raised some of you in ranks over others (6:165).

يَرْفَعِ اللّٰهُ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا مِنْكُمْ وَالَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوا الْعِلْمَ

... and Allah will raise up in rank those of you who believe and those who have been given knowledge (58:11).

So, it is obvious that the word, *raf'* : raising, in the sense of the raising of rank or status has been used figuratively in view of the context of the aforementioned verses. There is no reason here to ignore the real meaning and go by that which is figurative. Moreover, by using the word, *ilā* : الی (towards) alongwith the word, *raf'* (رفع : raising), at this particular place, the possibility of such a figurative meaning has been totally eliminated. What is said in this verse is رَافِعُكَ اِلَيَّ : *rāfi'uka ilaiyya*: I shall raise you towards Me. Then there is the verse from Sūrah al-Nisā' (4:158), which refutes the belief of Jews; there too, what was said is: وَمَا قَتَلُوْهُ يَقِيْنًا بَلْ رَّفَعَهُ اللّٰهُ اِلَيْهِ that is, the Jews certainly did not kill Jesus, instead, Allah raised him towards Himself. This later expression is used for nothing but the raising alive of the spirit and the body.

Explained this far were the words of the verse.

Allah Almighty's Five Promises to Jesus

In the verse under reference, Allah Almighty made five promises to 'Īsā علیہ السلام vis-a-vis the Jews:

1. The first promise was that his death will not come at the hands of the Jews through killing. It will be a natural death coming at its appointed time and that appointed time will come close to the Day of Doom, when 'Īsā علیہ السلام will come down from the heavens onto the earth as reported in details in sound aḥādīth transmitted through unbroken chains, part of which will appear later.

2. The second promise was to raise him towards the heavens in the

existing situation. This was fulfilled right then. The report of this fulfillment was given in Surah al-Nisa' (4:158) by saying:

وَمَا قَتَلُوْهُ يَقِيْنًا بَلْ رَّفَعَهُ اللّٰهُ اِلَيْهِ

Certainly, the Jews did not kill him, instead; Allah Almighty raised him towards Himself.

3. The third promise was: وَمُطَهِّرُكَ مِنَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا , that is, to have him cleansed of false accusations brought on him by his enemies. That promise was fulfilled when the last of the prophets صلى الله عليه وسلم came and refuted all false accusations of the Jews. For instance, the Jews threw slanders on the parentage of Sayyidna' 'Isa عليه السلام because of his having been born without a father. The noble Qur'an refuted this slander by declaring that he was born without a father because such was the power and will of Allah. And that too does not call for much of a surprise. More surprising is the birth of Adam since he was born without both a father and a mother.

The Jews accused Sayyidna 'Isa عليه السلام of claiming to be God. There are many verses in the noble Qur'an in which, contrary to this accusation, Sayyidna 'Isa عليه السلام has been reported to have publicly confessed his being human and a servant and bondsman of Allah.

4. The fourth promise appears in وَجَاعِلُ الَّذِيْنَ اتَّبَعُوْكَ فَوْقَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا (and placed those who follow you above those who disbelieve) which means that his followers will be made to overcome those who deny and oppose him. This promise was fulfilled in the sense that following here means the belief in and confession of the prophethood of Sayyidna 'Isa عليه السلام. The belief in and the practice of all injunctions ascribed to him is not a pre-condition. Thus the Christians and the Muslims both fall in this category as they believe in the prophethood and messengership of Sayyidna 'Isa عليه السلام . However, this is a different matter that holding this much of belief is not enough to bring forth salvation in the Hereafter. Instead, the salvation in the Hereafter depends on believing in all injunctions brought by Sayyidna 'Isa عليه السلام . One of the instructions given by Sayyidna 'Isa عليه السلام was that his followers should believe and have faith in the last of the Prophets (صلى الله عليه وسلم), who would come after Jesus departs. The Christians did not follow this instruction in matters of faith and belief, therefore, they deprived them-

selves of salvation in the Hereafter while Muslims acted in accordance with that too, therefore, they became deserving of salvation in the Hereafter. But, part of the promise which relates to having dominant authority over Jews was dependent on the prophethood of Sayyidnā 'Isā عليه السلام only. That dominance in the world has always been the fate of Christians and Muslims vis-à-vis the Jews, and surely, so shall it be through the Day of Judgement.

From the time when Allah Almighty made this promise right upto now, it has always been the case that the Christians and Muslims have dominated the Jews. The world has seen the establishment of their empires. The existence of the present state of Israel cannot make the truth of this position doubtful for several reasons. To begin with, and in reality, this state is no more than a manifestation of the military might of Russia and the Christians of Euro-American origin which they have established and maintained against Muslims. As soon as Russia, America and countries of Europe withdraw their patronage, the world will itself witness the instant collapse of this state and its disappearance from the map of the world. Therefore, people who can see the reality do realise the actual position of Israel or the Government of the Jews. It is by no means a manifestation of the domination of Jews. If, just for the sake of argument, it is taken to be their own state, even then, who would - in his right frame of mind - deny that, given the totality of Christians and Muslims, they are wielders of lesser influence and are much subjugated with fear. Even if we were to leave this aspect aside, we know that a temporary domination by the Jews close to the Day of Judgement has been reported in the authentic reports of the Holy Prophet ﷺ . Now if this world is destined to exist for any considerable period of time and if the Day of Judgement is close, that domination too is not contrary to the reports which Muslims consider authentic. Moreover, such short-lived occupation cannot be given the name of a state or government especially when it is based on a conspiracy hatched by the Christians and the communists.

5. The fifth promise, that of giving a decision in respect of such conflicts in faith on the Day of Judgement will certainly be fulfilled on its appointed time as it has been indicated in the verse:

ثُمَّ إِلَيَّ مَرْجِعُكُمْ فَأَحْكُمُ بَيْنَكُمْ

Then, to Me is your return, whereupon I shall judge between you. (3:55)

JESUS: The question of his life and second coming:

The Jews are the only people in the world who say that Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام was crucified, killed and buried following which he never returned to life. What happened really and truly has been clarified in verse 158 of Sūrah al-Nisā' in the Holy Qur'ān. Then, in وَمَكَرُوا وَمَكَرَ اللّٰهُ (And they made a move, and Allah made a move.) of the present verse, it has been pointed out that Allah Almighty made the sinister move of the enemies of 'Īsā recoil upon those who had gone into the house to kill Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام. It was one of them that Allah Almighty changed to look exactly like Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام and then He raised Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام alive onto the heavens. The words of the verse are as follows:

وَمَا قَتَلُوْهُ وَمَا صَلَبُوْهُ وَلٰكِنْ شُبِّهَ لَهُمْ

And they did not kill him and they did not crucify him, but they were deluded by resemblance (4:157).

Details regarding this will appear under the commentary on Sūrah al-Nisā'.

The Christians said that Jesus was, no doubt, killed on the cross but was brought back to life once again and raised onto the heavens. The verse under reference has refuted this false notion as well. It is stressed here that similar to the Jews who were rejoicing after killing their own man, the Christians fell a victim to the same mistaken identity by believing that it was Jesus who got killed on the Cross, and as such, the Christians too became the victims of mistaken identity. This is obvious from the Qur'ānic statement شُبِّهَ لَهُمْ (they were deluded by resemblance) just like the Jews were deceived by mistaken identity.

As opposed to the view of these two groups, there is the Islamic belief, stated here in this verse and in several other verses clearly, which says that Allah Almighty raised him alive onto the heavens in order to rescue him from the Jews. He was not to be killed and he was not to be crucified. He is in the heavens alive and it will be close to the Day of Judgement when he shall come down from the heavens, lead the Mus-

lims to victory over the Jews, and finally, he will die a natural death.

There is a consensus of the entire Muslim community on this belief. Ḥāfiẓ ibn Hajr, in his *Talkhīṣ al-Ḥabīr,* has reported this consensus (page 319). This belief, and the consensus of the community on it, stands proved on the authority of several verses of the Holy Qur'ān and reports from *mutawātir* aḥādīth transmitted through an unbroken chain of reporting. However, this is not the place for its detailed discussion, and not necessary either. The reason being that scholars of the community have already taken up this question in special books with full clarity giving detailed answers to those who dispute in the Ascension of the Christ. For instance, the Arabic work, *'Aqīdatu l'Islām fī Ḥayāti* 'Īsā عليه السلام by Ḥujjatu l'Islām Maulānā Sayyid Muḥammad Anwar Shāh al-Kashmīrī, Ḥayāt-e-'Īsā عليه السلام, (the Life of Jesus) in Urdu by Haḍrat Maulānā Badr 'Alam Muhājir Madani, Ḥayāt-e-Masīḥ عليه السلام in Urdu by Maulānā Sayyid Muḥammad Idrīs and hundreds of other books or essays dealing with this question have been widely published and circulated. While carrying out the orders of his respected teacher, Maulānā Sayyid Muḥammad Anwar Shāh al-Kashmīrī, this writer had collected more than one hundred *mutawātir* aḥādīth identified by him which prove in an undeniable manner that Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام was raised alive and that he will return close to the Day of Judgement. This collection in book form and entitled, *Al-Taṣrīḥ bimā Tawatara fī Nuzūl al-Masīḥ* has been recently published from Beirut with marginal notes and commentary by 'Allāma 'Abd al-Fattāḥ Abū Ghuddah, a revered scholar of Allepo, Syria.

Ḥāfiẓ ibn Kathīr while explaining the verse وانه لعلم للساعة of Sūrah Al-Zukhruf (43:61) has said:

وقد تواترت الاحاديث عن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلّم انه اخبر بنزول عيسى عليه السلام قبل يوم القيامة اماما عادلاً الخ

> There are aḥādīth from the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, narrated in an uninterrupted succession, that he proclaimed the coming of 'Īsā عليه السلام before the Day of Judgment as a just leader.

At this stage I would like to draw the attention of the reader to a point which, if noticed even with a small measure of sanity and justice,

would leave no room for any doubt regarding this question. The point is that in the eleventh section of Sūrah 'Āl-'Imrān, Allah Almighty while refering to past prophets deemed it sufficient to refer to prophets Ādam, Nūḥ, 'Āl-Ibrāhīm and 'Āl-'Imrān briefly in one single verse. After that, it was in nearly three sections and twenty two verses that reference was made to Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام and his family with meticulous detail - something which has not been made in that manner even in respect of the Last of the prophets صلى الله عليه وسلم to whom the Qur'ān was revealed. Note the detailed mention of the grandmother of Jesus, her pledge, the birth of his mother, her name, her upbringing, the conceiving of Jesus by his mother then the detailed narrative of his birth, followed by the description of what his mother ate and drank, after child birth, her return to the family with the newborn child, their blames and curses, first the gift of eloquence to the newborn as his miracle, then his growing up and call to his people, opposition faced and the help of disciples, the hostile attempts by the Jews to trap and kill him, his being raised alive onto the heavens - then complete details of his additional traits, his looks, physique, dress and its likes - these are accounts which have not been taken up in the whole spectrum of the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth in respect of any prophet or messenger with that much of detail. This point is an open invitation to everyone to think as to why did this happen and what was the wisdom behind it.

Even a moment's reflection here makes it clear that the Last of the prophets صلى الله عليه وسلم, being the final prophet and messenger with no apostle to come after him, took special care to guide his community about conditions that it was going to face right through the Day of Judgement. He therefore, took upon himself to identify those who would be worthy of the community's following. He, as a matter of principle, described them with a profile of their general qualities. There were other blessed people whom he identified by name and emphatically asked the community to follow them. Other than these, he also marked out the astray and the deviating who posed a danger to the faith of the community.

Of the mischief-makers who were to come after the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم the most notorious was Dajjāl (the anti-Christ) the imposter of the Messiah, whose disturbing wickedness was terribly deviation-prone. Therefore, the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم related many de-

tails of his profile, attending conditions and distinguishing traits, so that there remains no room for the community to doubt about his being a mischief monger whenever he appears. Similarly, among the later day religious reformers and power-worthy elders, Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام is the most distinguished whom Allah Almighty blessed with the station of prophethood, kept him alive in the heavens to come to the rescue of the Muslim community during the wicked period of Dajjāl (anti-Christ) and appointed him to kill Dajjāl close to the Day of Judgement. This is why it was deemed necessary that the community should be given the most clear indications of his person and qualities as well, so that no human being remains in doubt while identifying Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام when he comes, the second time.

There are many elements of wisdom in this treatment.

Firstly, should the community find it difficult to identify 'Īsā (Jesus Christ) عليه السلام , the very purpose of his coming will be negated. If the Muslim community will not identify and cooperate with him, how could he help and support them? Secondary, although Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام will not come into the world at that time designated as Prophet, but he would come to lead the Muslim community as the *Khalifa* (viceregent) the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم , the personal station of prophethood that he has will not be taken from him. Instead, he would be like the governor of a province or state who continues to hold that position even if he has gone out to visit some other province or state for some reason. Therefore, even though he is not as a governor in that province, the office of the governorship has not been *ipso facto* taken away from him. Similarly, Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام will not be without his attribute of prophethood at that time, and the way the rejection of his prophethood was infidelity earlier, so infidelity it shall be at that time. Now the Muslim community which has already nursed and shown its faith in his prophethood as based on the guidance of the Qur'ān would fall into the grievous error of rejection, if it fails to recognize him when he comes. So, clarifying his signs and attributes in a greater measure was extremely necessary.

Thirdly, since the event of the coming of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام will take place towards the later years of this mortal world, chances were - given the ambiguity in his marks of identification that some other per-

son could come up with the claim of being Messiah, the son of Mary, in which case, these indicators will serve well to refute and reject any such claim. This is what happened in pre-partition India where Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian claimed that he was the promised Messiah. The scholars of the Muslim community refuted his claim on the basis of these very cited indicators.

In short, here and at other places, the very fact of such detailed description concerning Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام is in itself indicating that his reappearance is due close to the Day of Judgement and that he would return to the world. This humble writer has taken up this subject in full details in his Urdu treatise entitled Masīḥ Maw'ūd kī pahchān (Identifying the Promised Messiah) which may be consulted for these details.

Verses 56 - 58

فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فَأُعَذِّبُهُمْ عَذَابًا شَدِيدًا فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ
وَمَا لَهُمْ مِنْ نَاصِرِينَ ﴿٥٦﴾ وَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا
الصَّالِحَاتِ فَيُوَفِّيهِمْ أُجُورَهُمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٥٧﴾
ذَٰلِكَ نَتْلُوهُ عَلَيْكَ مِنَ الْآيَاتِ وَالذِّكْرِ الْحَكِيمِ ﴿٥٨﴾

Now, as for those who disbelieve, I shall punish them, a severe punishment, in this world and in the Hereafter; and for them there are no helpers. [56]

And as for those who believe and do good deeds, He (Allah) will give them their rewards in full. And Allah does not like transgressors. [57]

This We recite to you of the Verses and the Message that is full of wisdom. [58]

Sequence

In the previous verse (56), it was said that Allah will be the final judge and decision-maker in what they used to differ in between themselves. This verse describes that decision.

Commentary

Are the sufferings of this world beneficial for the next life?

The words "I shall punish them in this world and in the Hereafter"

in verse 56 may create a little doubt. Since the statement here relates to the judgement to be pronounced on the Last Day, how can the statement -'I shall punish them in this world and in the hereafter'- be explained as this world of ours would not exist at that time and even though it exists today, but the judgement is to be given on the Day of Resurrection?

This difficulty can be resolved by turning to an analogy. This saying is similar to the saying of a judge to a culprit -'Right now I am sending you to the jail for a year; if you misbehave there, I shall make it for two years'- which simply means that those two years will be counted from the day the punishment is being awarded. Based on this, it is certain that following any misbehaviour the two-year punishment will become effective. So, given the misconduct, the validity of this whole will regulate itself for one more year as 'add-on'.

The same applies here as the punishment in the world has already been given; now the punishment of the Hereafter will be added on and the sum-total will be finally executed on the Last Day, that is, having been punished in the world will not serve as expiation for the punishment of the Hereafter. This is contrary to the condition of believers who, when struck by suffering in the mortal world, have their sins forgiven and find the punishment due in the Hereafter lightened or warded off. For this reason, a hint to this effect has been made in لَا يُحِبُّ الظَّالِمِينَ (and Allah does not like transgressors -v. 57), that is, believers are dear because of their belief and the beloved ones are always treated in such a manner. The disbelievers are detested because of their disbelief and those detested do not receive such treatment. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

Verses 59 - 63

إِنَّ مَثَلَ عِيسَىٰ عِندَ اللَّهِ كَمَثَلِ آدَمَ ۖ خَلَقَهُ مِن تُرَابٍ ثُمَّ قَالَ
لَهُ كُن فَيَكُونُ ﴿٥٩﴾ الْحَقُّ مِن رَّبِّكَ فَلَا تَكُن مِّنَ
الْمُمْتَرِينَ ﴿٦٠﴾ فَمَنْ حَاجَّكَ فِيهِ مِن بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَكَ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ
فَقُلْ تَعَالَوْا نَدْعُ أَبْنَاءَنَا وَأَبْنَاءَكُمْ وَنِسَاءَنَا وَنِسَاءَكُمْ
وَأَنفُسَنَا وَأَنفُسَكُمْ ثُمَّ نَبْتَهِلْ فَنَجْعَل لَّعْنَتَ اللَّهِ عَلَى

الْكٰذِبِيْنَ ﴿٦١﴾ اِنَّ هٰذَا لَهُوَ الْقَصَصُ الْحَقُّ ۚ وَ مَا مِنْ اِلٰهٍ اِلَّا
اللّٰهُ ۭ وَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَهُوَ الْعَزِيْزُ الْحَكِيْمُ ﴿٦٢﴾ فَاِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ
عَلِيْمٌۢ بِالْمُفْسِدِيْنَ ﴿٦٣﴾

Surely, the case of 'Īsā, in the sight of Allah, is like the case of 'Ādam. He created him from dust, then said to him, "Be", and he came to be. [59] **The truth is from your Lord. So, do not be of those who doubt.** [60]

So, if someone argues with you in this after what has come to you of the knowledge, say, "Come, let us call our sons and your sons, our women and your women, ourselves and yourselves, then pray and invoke the curse of Allah upon the liars." [61]

This is, indeed, the true narration. And there exists no god but Allah. And Allah is surely the All-Mighty, the All-Wise. [62]

So, should they turn back, Allah is all-aware of the mischievous. [63]

The event of *Mubāhala* and the refutation of heretics.

The background of these verses is that the Holy Prophet ﷺ sent an ultimatum to the Christians of Najrān which included three options in the order given below:

1. Accept Islām, or

2. Pay *jizya* (a levy on free non-Muslims under Muslim rule), or

3. Get ready for a war.

After mutual consultation, the Christians sent a delegation to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم consisting of Shuraḥbīl 'Abdullāh b. Shuraḥbīl and Jabbār ibn Fayḍ to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم . They came and began their talks on religious issues. When they, in their effort to prove the godhood of Jesus, took their debate to the extremes of dispute, that was the moment this verse of *Mubāhala* was revealed. Thereupon, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم invited the Christians to join in the *Mubāhala* confrontation (a form of resolving disputes by praying to Allah, the details of which shall shortly be discussed) and quite readily, he himself came out with Sayyidah Fāṭimah رضی اللہ عنہا ,

Sayyidnā 'Alī رضی اللہ عنہ and their sons, Ḥasan and Ḥusain رضی اللہ عنہما along with him all set for the *Mubāhalah*. Looking at this, Shuraḥbīl said to his two comrades: 'Look, you already know that he is a prophet of Allah and getting into a *Mubāhalah* confrontation with a prophet means certain death and destruction for us. So find out some other way to get out of this fix.' His comrades asked him as to what he thought it could be. Shuraḥbīl said: 'I think the best solution is to opt for a truce as advised by the prophet'. So, on this everybody agreed. As a result, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم made peace by fixing a levy on them which was accepted by them as well. (Tafsīr ibn Kathīr, v. 1).

The Meaning of *Mubāhalah*

As stated earlier, verse 61 has instructed the Holy Prophet ﷺ to invite his opponents (Christians) to *Mubāhalah* which literally means 'mutual prayer' but in the terminology of Islāmic Sharī'ah it refers to a particular form of resolving religious disputes. When the argumentations from both sides fail to resolve a religious issue, the parties jointly pray Allah to cast His curse on whichever of the two parties is false. Since curse means 'moving someone far away from the divine mercy', -and moving far away from mercy is being close to divine wrath--therefore, the essence of the meaning is: Wrath be on the liar. As such, whoever is the liar shall face the evil consequences whereupon the truth will become evident before the disbelievers as well. Invocation in this manner is called '*Mubāhalah*'.

Originally, the *Mubāhalah* can be carried out by the disputants only; they can simply get together and pray. It is not necessary that all their family members are assembled. However, if all the family members participate in the *Mubāhalah,* it becomes more effective. (That is why the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم was instructed to invite the family members of both sides).

'Son' includes grandson

In verse 61 the words 'our sons' does not mean 'our' sons as of the loins only. Instead, the sense is general. They may be sons or grandsons, because this is how the word is used in common usage. Therefore, the grandsons of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم , namely Sayyidnā Ḥasan and Sayyidnā Ḥusain رضی اللہ عنہما , as well as Sayyidnā 'Alī رضی اللہ عنہ the son-in-law of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم

are all included in the words: 'our sons'.

Sayyidnā 'Alī رضى الله عنه has another additional reason for being included in the 'sons' of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, because he had grown up under the patronage of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم who had treated him like his own son.

It is, therefore, evident that Sayyidnā 'Alī رضى الله عنه is included in the words: 'our sons'. Some *Shī'ites* have claimed that since he was not the son of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم he could not be referred to by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم as 'our son'. Through this notion the *Shī'ites* conclude that Sayyidnā 'Alī رضى الله عنه was included in the words 'ourselves', therefore, he was the immediate successor of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم.

The fallacy of this argument is evident from what has been discussed above.

Verse 64

قُلْ يَآ اَهْلَ الْكِتٰبِ تَعَالَوْا اِلٰى كَلِمَةٍ سَوَآءٍ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ اَلَّا نَعْبُدَ اِلَّا اللّٰهَ وَلَا نُشْرِكَ بِهٖ شَيْئًا وَّلَا يَتَّخِذَ بَعْضُنَا بَعْضًا اَرْبَابًا مِّنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ ۭ فَاِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَقُوْلُوا اشْهَدُوْا بِاَنَّا مُسْلِمُوْنَ ﴿٦٤﴾

Say, "O people of the Book, come to a word common between us and you that we worship none but Allah, that we associate nothing with Him and that some of us do not take some others as lords instead of Allah." Then, should they turn back, say, "You be witness that we are Muslims."[64]

Commentary:

Important Principles of *Tablīgh* and *Da'wah*:

This verse: تَعَالَوْا اِلٰى كَلِمَةٍ سَوَآءٍ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ unfolds an important principle of *Tablīgh* (Preaching) and *Da'wah* (Preaching Islām). The principle requires that a person, who desires to carry his call to a group which holds beliefs and ideas different from his own, should follow a particular method. That method is to induce that group to unite only on what they both can agree to, for instance, when the Holy Prophet ﷺ gave

the Byzantine ruler, Hiraql (Heraclius) the call to Islām, he picked up a particular point on which there was mutual agreement, i.e., on the Oneness of Allah Almighty. That invitation is reproduced below:

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم، من محمّد عبد الله ورسوله الى هرقل عظيم
الروم، سلام على من اتبع الهدى، اما بعد فانى ادعوك بدعاية الاسلام
اسلم تسلم يؤتك الله اجرك مرتين فان توليت فان عليك اثم اليريسين،
يَاَهْلَ الْكِتٰبِ تَعَالَوْا اِلٰى كَلِمَةٍ سَوَآءٍۢ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ اَلَّا نَعْبُدَ اِلَّا اللّٰهَ
وَلَا نُشْرِكَ بِهٖ شَيْئًا وَّلَا يَتَّخِذَ بَعْضُنَا بَعْضًا اَرْبَابًا مِّنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ (البخارى)

I begin with the name of Allah who is All-Merciful, Very-Merciful. From Muhammad, servant of Allah, and His messenger: To Heraclius, the Byzantine emperor. Peace be on him who takes the right path. After that, I invite you to the call of Islām. Embrace Islām and be in peace. Allah will bestow upon you a twofold reward, but should you turn away, then, on you shall be the sin of your subjects. "O people of the Book, come to a word common between us and you that we worship none but Allah, that we associate nothing with Him and that some of us do not take some others as Lord instead of Allah." (Al-Bukhārī)

The statement, 'you be witness...' in the last sentence of the verse teaches us a lesson, that is, should someone refuse to accept the truth, even after it has been proved clearly, then the proper course is to re-state one's own belief and conclude the conversation. Entering into further debate and verbal altercation is not appropriate.

Verses 65 - 68

يَاَهْلَ الْكِتٰبِ لِمَ تُحَآجُّوْنَ فِيْٓ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ وَمَآ اُنْزِلَتِ التَّوْرٰىةُ
وَالْاِنْجِيْلُ اِلَّا مِنْۢ بَعْدِهٖ ؕ اَفَلَا تَعْقِلُوْنَ ﴿٦٥﴾ هٰٓاَنْتُمْ هٰٓؤُلَآءِ
حَاجَجْتُمْ فِيْمَا لَكُمْ بِهٖ عِلْمٌ فَلِمَ تُحَآجُّوْنَ فِيْمَا لَيْسَ لَكُمْ بِهٖ
عِلْمٌ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ يَعْلَمُ وَاَنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٦٦﴾ مَا كَانَ اِبْرٰهِيْمُ
يَهُوْدِيًّا وَّلَا نَصْرَانِيًّا وَّلٰكِنْ كَانَ حَنِيْفًا مُّسْلِمًا ؕ وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ
الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ ﴿٦٧﴾ اِنَّ اَوْلَى النَّاسِ بِاِبْرٰهِيْمَ لَلَّذِيْنَ اتَّبَعُوْهُ وَهٰذَا

النَّبِيُّ وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا ۗ وَاللّٰهُ وَلِيُّ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿٦٨﴾

O people of the Book, why do you argue about Ibrāhīm while the Torah and the Injīl were not revealed until after him? Have you, then, no sense? [65]

Look, this is what you are - you argued about what you had knowledge; why then do you argue about what you have no knowledge? And Allah knows and you do not know. [66]

Ibrāhīm was not a Jew, nor a Christian. But he was upright, a Muslim, and was not one of those who associate partners with Allah. [67]

The closest of people to Ibrāhīm are those who followed him, and this prophet, and those who believe. And Allah is guardian of the believers. [68]

Commentary

The argumentation referred to in verse 65 was to decide whether Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm علیہ السلام followed the way of the Jews, or that of the Christians. The futility of their exercise already stood exposed as both these ways in religion appeared long after the revelation of the Old and New Testaments. These just did not exist before that. How, then, could it be claimed that Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm علیہ السلام adhered to these ways?

Verse 66 points out to the hollowness of their approach when they indulged in their argumentation on the basis of incomplete knowledge. That they would venture to do so on the basis of no knowledge could hardly he explained. The truth is that only Allah knows the way of Ibrāhīm علیہ السلام .

That way has been described in Verse 67.

Verse 68 declares that the closest of people to Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm were those who followed him during his time and now the closest to him is the Prophet of Islām, Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم and so are the believers in him and in past prophets. These believers are the community of Muḥammad صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم and their guardian is Allah and He will reward them for their belief.

Verses 69 - 71

وَدَّتْ طَّآئِفَةٌ مِّنْ اَهْلِ الْكِتٰبِ لَوْ يُضِلُّوْنَكُمْ ؕ وَمَا يُضِلُّوْنَ اِلَّآ
اَنْفُسَهُمْ وَمَا يَشْعُرُوْنَ ﴿٦٩﴾ يٰٓاَهْلَ الْكِتٰبِ لِمَ تَكْفُرُوْنَ بِاٰيٰتِ
اللّٰهِ وَاَنْتُمْ تَشْهَدُوْنَ ﴿٧٠﴾ يٰٓاَهْلَ الْكِتٰبِ لِمَ تَلْبِسُوْنَ الْحَقَّ
بِالْبَاطِلِ وَتَكْتُمُوْنَ الْحَقَّ وَاَنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٧١﴾

A group from the people of the Book loves to mislead you, while they mislead none but themselves and they do not realise. [69]

O people of the Book, why do you disbelieve in the signs of Allah while you are yourselves a witness? [70]

O People of the Book, why do you confound the truth with falsehood, and conceal the truth when you know? [71]

Commentary

Verse 69 exposes the cherished desire of the people of the Book to mislead Muslims away from the true faith they are on. The text, then, firmly declares that the victim of their effort to misguide is no one other than themselves, something they do not realize.

Verse 70, addressing the people of the Book, asks them as to why they disbelieve in the signs of Allah, such as the verses in Torah and Injīl which prove the prophethood of Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وسلم because the denial of his prophethood amounts to declaring these verses to be false which is infidelity, although they themselves confirm these as true. This is an admonition on their error in belief.

Proceeding further, Verse 71 admonishes them for confusing the real statement, that is, the prophecy about the prophethood of Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وسلم with the fictitious, that is, the interpolated statements or false exegesis. The crucial question being asked is as to why would they conceal the truth of the matter despite knowing the truth, and knowing that they are hiding it.

The words in اَنْتُمْ تَشْهَدُوْنَ (you are yourselves a witness - 70) and in اَنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُوْنَ (you know - 71) should not be taken to mean that disbelief will become permissible for them if they do not attest to the truth or have no

knowledge about it. This is because *kufr* (disbelief) is intrinsically an abominable thing to practice. This is prohibited under all conditions. However, the mention of *kufr* (disbelief) after knowledge and attestation is to increase the impact of reproachment.

Verses 72 - 74

وَقَالَتْ طَّآئِفَةٌ مِّنْ اَهْلِ الْكِتٰبِ اٰمِنُوْا بِالَّذِيْٓ اُنْزِلَ عَلَى الَّذِيْنَ
اٰمَنُوْا وَجْهَ النَّهَارِ وَاكْفُرُوْٓا اٰخِرَهٗ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُوْنَ ﴿٧٢﴾
وَلَا تُؤْمِنُوْٓا اِلَّا لِمَنْ تَبِعَ دِيْنَكُمْ ۭ قُلْ اِنَّ الْهُدٰى هُدَى اللّٰهِ ۙ اَنْ
يُّؤْتٰٓى اَحَدٌ مِّثْلَ مَآ اُوْتِيْتُمْ اَوْ يُحَاۗجُّوْكُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّكُمْ ۭ قُلْ اِنَّ
الْفَضْلَ بِيَدِ اللّٰهِ ۚ يُؤْتِيْهِ مَنْ يَّشَاۗءُ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿٧٣﴾
يَّخْتَصُّ بِرَحْمَتِهٖ مَنْ يَّشَاۗءُ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ ذُو الْفَضْلِ الْعَظِيْمِ ﴿٧٤﴾

And a group from the people of the Book said, "Believe in what has been revealed to the believers in the early part of the day, and disbelieve at the end of it, so that they may turn back. [72] **And do not believe except in those who follow your faith." Say, "(Real) guidance is the guidance of Allah." (But all that you do is due to your envy) that someone is given what is similar to that which you have been given, or that they argue against you before your Lord. Say, "The bounty is in the hands of Allah. He gives it to whom He wills. And Allah is All-Embracing, All-Knowing.** [73] **He chooses for His grace whom He wills. And Allah is the Lord of great bounty."** [74]

Some from among the people of the Book chose a strategy of deception in order to mislead Muslims. According to their agreed plan, they would declare their belief in the Qur'ān in the morning and then reject it in the evening. They thought that this quick about-turn would create doubts in the minds of Muslims about Qur'ān and Islām and they might turn away from their faith thinking that there must be something wrong with Islām visible to such learned people who were open-minded enough to accept it first. They also made it a point to reserve their feinted declaration of belief in Islām to hoodwink Muslims only! Their true belief, they planned, would be affirmed before none

but only those who follow their own creed. The rule was: Sincerity with the later, expediency with the former!

That these tricks are low is proved later in Verse 73 when the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم has been asked to declare that their clever moves are not going to work for them since Guidance given to servants of Allah is certainly from Allah. So, it is He who, with Guidance in His control, can make whoever He will steadfast on that Guidance. No one can succeed in weaning such a person away from it with any trick, plan or enticement whatsoever.

The reason why they act in the way they do is envy, that is, they envy Muslims as to why they were given the Scripture, or they envy their supremacy in religious argument. It is because of this envy that they keep working to bring about the downfall of Islām and of the community that adheres to it.

That this envy is based on not knowing the nature, timing and wisdom of Allah's grace and mercy is explained in the later part of verse 73 and in verse 74.

Verse 75

وَمِنْ اَهْلِ الْكِتٰبِ مَنْ اِنْ تَاْمَنْهُ بِقِنْطَارٍ يُّؤَدِّهٖٓ اِلَيْكَ ۚ وَمِنْهُمْ
مَّنْ اِنْ تَاْمَنْهُ بِدِيْنَارٍ لَّا يُؤَدِّهٖٓ اِلَيْكَ اِلَّا مَا دُمْتَ عَلَيْهِ قَآئِمًا ۭ
ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّھُمْ قَالُوْا لَيْسَ عَلَيْنَا فِي الْاُمِّيّٖنَ سَبِيْلٌ ۚ وَيَقُوْلُوْنَ
عَلَي اللّٰهِ الْكَذِبَ وَھُمْ يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٧٥﴾

And among the people of the Book there is one who, if you entrust him with a heap (of gold or silver), will give it back to you; and among them there is one who, if you entrust him with a single *dinār*, he will not give it back to you unless you keep standing over him. This is because they have said, "There is no way we can be blamed in the matter of the unlettered." And they tell lies about Allah knowingly. [75]

Sequence

In the previous verses (70-72), breach of faith committed by the people of the Book was mentioned. This included disbelieving in the

verses of Allah, confusing the truth with what is false, concealing the truth and conspiring to mislead Muslim believers.

In the verse cited above (75), their breach of trust in matters of property has been mentioned. Since some of them happened to be trustworthy, both types were identified.

Commentary

Praising good qualities in some non-Muslim is correct

In this verse (75), some people have been praised for their trustworthiness. If this 'some' refers to those among the people of the Book who had embraced Islam, praising them poses no problems. But, in case, it does not refer to Muslims particularly and instead, refers to the people of the Book in the absolute sense including non-Muslims as well, then the situation generates the question: When no act of a *kafir* (disbeliever) is acceptable why praise them?

The answer is that for an action or deed to become acceptable is a different matter and having a word of praise for it is something else. From praising something it does not follow that it is acceptable with Allah. The purpose is to point out that something good, even if it be that of a *kafir* (disbeliever), is good enough in a certain degree, the benefit of which he receives in the form of good reputation in the mortal world, and of course, in the Hereafter, in the form of a reduction in punishment for his disbelief.

This statement also makes it clear that Islam does not resort to prejudice and short-sightedness. On the contrary, it shows open-hearted appreciation of the excellence of even its adversary in respect of his achievements.

It is from this verse: إِلَّا مَا دُمْتَ عَلَيْهِ قَائِمًا (unless you keep standing over him - 75) that Imam Abu Hanifah has deduced the ruling that the lender has the right to keep pursuing the borrower until he receives his due. (Qurtubi, v. 4)

Verses 76 - 77

بَلٰى مَنْ اَوْفٰى بِعَهْدِهٖ وَاتَّقٰى فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَّقِيْنَ ﴿٧٦﴾ اِنَّ
الَّذِيْنَ يَشْتَرُوْنَ بِعَهْدِ اللّٰهِ وَاَيْمَانِهِمْ ثَمَنًا قَلِيْلًا اُولٰٓئِكَ لَا خَلَاقَ

لَهُمْ فِى الْاٰخِرَةِ وَلَا يُكَلِّمُهُمُ اللّٰهُ وَلَا يَنْظُرُ اِلَيْهِمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ وَلَا يُزَكِّيْهِمْ ص وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ ﴿٧٧﴾

Why not? Whoever fulfils his pledge and fears Allah, then, Allah loves the God-fearing. [76] **Surely, those who take a small price out of the covenant of Allah and out of their oaths, for them there is no share in the Hereafter, and Allah will not speak to them, nor will He look towards them on the Day of Doom, nor will He purify them. And for them there is a painful punishment.** [77]

Sequence

Earlier, in يَقُوْلُوْنَ (they say - 75), there was a refutation of the claim made by the people of the Book. Onwards from there, in verses 76-77, the same refutation has been re-asserted and the merit of fulfilling a commitment as well as the condemnation for its breach have been clarified.

Commentary

'Ahd (pledge or covenant) is what gets settled between parties concerned after mutual discussions and by which both of them have to abide. Contrary to this is وعده : *wa'dah* or promise which issues forth from a single side, that is, *'ahd* (pledge or covenant) is bilateral while *wa'dah* (promise) is unilateral.

That commitments should be fulfilled has been stressed in the Qur'ān and Sunnah time and again. For instance, right here in verse 77 cited above, five warnings have been given to those who break their solemn pledge:

1. They will have no share in the blessings of the heaven. In a ḥadīth, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said that one who usurps the right of a Muslim under false oath makes the fire of Hell compulsory for himself. The narrator of the ḥadīth asked if the Fire will become compulsory even if this concerned something very insignificant? In reply, he said: Even if this be the green bough of a tree. (Muslim vide Maẓharī)

2. Allah Almighty will not speak to them with glad tidings.

3. Allah Almighty will not look at them mercifully on the Day of Doom.

4. Allah Almighty will not forgive them their sins since they wasted away the rights of a servant of Allah through breach of trust, and Allah will not forgive what a human being owes to another human being. In Islāmic terminology, this is known as the *ḥaqq al-'abd* or the right of a servant of Allah.

5. And a grievous punishment shall await them.

Verses 78 - 80

وَإِنَّ مِنْهُمْ لَفَرِيقًا يَلْوُونَ أَلْسِنَتَهُم بِالْكِتَابِ لِتَحْسَبُوهُ مِنَ
الْكِتَابِ وَمَا هُوَ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَيَقُولُونَ هُوَ مِنْ عِندِ اللَّهِ وَمَا
هُوَ مِنْ عِندِ اللَّهِ وَيَقُولُونَ عَلَى اللَّهِ الْكَذِبَ وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ
﴿٧٨﴾ مَا كَانَ لِبَشَرٍ أَن يُؤْتِيَهُ اللَّهُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحُكْمَ وَالنُّبُوَّةَ ثُمَّ
يَقُولَ لِلنَّاسِ كُونُوا عِبَادًا لِّي مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ وَلَٰكِن
كُونُوا رَبَّانِيِّينَ بِمَا كُنتُمْ تُعَلِّمُونَ الْكِتَابَ وَبِمَا كُنتُمْ تَدْرُسُونَ
﴿٧٩﴾ وَلَا يَأْمُرَكُمْ أَن تَتَّخِذُوا الْمَلَائِكَةَ وَالنَّبِيِّينَ أَرْبَابًا ط
أَيَأْمُرُكُم بِالْكُفْرِ بَعْدَ إِذْ أَنتُم مُّسْلِمُونَ ﴿٨٠﴾

And among them there is indeed a group who twist their tongues in (reading) the Book, so that you may deem it to be from the Book, while it is not from the Book. And they say, "It is from Allah", while it is not from Allah. And they tell lies about Allah knowingly. [78]

It is not (possible) for a man that Allah gives him the Book, the wisdom and the prophethood, then he starts saying to the people "Be my worshippers aside from Allah" rather, (he would say), "Be men of the Lord; as you have been teaching the Book, and as you have been learning it." [79]

Nor is it (possible for him) that he bids you to hold the angels and the prophets as Lords. Shall he bid you to disbelief, after your having become Muslims? [80]

Commentary

It was during the presence of the deputation from Nājrān that

some Jews and Christians had said: 'O Muḥammad, do you want us to worship you the way Christians worship Jesus, son of Mary?' He said: 'I seek refuge with Allah that we worship someone other than Allah or call on others to do so. Allah Almighty has not sent us to do that.' Thereupon, this verse was revealed.

The infallibility of the Prophets

The verse implies that a person whom Allah invests with the Book, the Wisdom and the power of making decisions, and places him on the great station of prophethood is always faithful to his mission when he communicates the Divine message to people and calls on them to become His faithful servants. That he starts moving people away from the worship of only one God and starts asking them to become his own worshippers or the worshippers of some other creatures is something he can never do. If so, this would mean that the one whom Allah had sent as his messenger did not, in fact, deserve this designation. Any government of this world, when appointing someone to an office of responsibility, always takes two factors into consideration:

1. Does the incumbent have the ability to comprehend and execute government policy?

2. How far can he be expected to execute government directives, and to hold its subjects in a stable stance of loyalty? No king or parliament would ever appoint someone as its representative or ambassador about whom there exists the least doubt of indulging in anti-government activity, or deviation from its policy or directives. However, it is possible that the government may have failed to make a correct assessment of a person's ability or loyalty. But with Allah even that element of doubt does not exist. If He knows about a man that he would not over-step the bounds of loyalty and obedience to Him, even in the slightest degree, then it is impossible that he could, later on, prove to be contrary to that assessment. Otherwise, it would mean that Divine knowledge is defective (we seek refuge with Allah!) Right from here, the question of the *'iṣmah* [1] (infallibility) of the prophets, عليهم السلام, becomes clear. Now that the blessed prophets are free of mi-

1. *'Iṣmah'* means a special protection given to someone by Allah which makes him refrain from sins. For the purpose of brevity we may translate it as 'infallibility' - editor.

nor sins, how can the probability of doing *shirk* (the major sin of associating others with Allah) or making revolt against Allah remain valid?

In this, there is the necessary refutation of the Christians who claimed that it was Masīḥ عليه السلام who asked them to have belief in his sonship and godhead. Also chastised were the Muslims who had gone to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم trying to find out if it was all right for them to prostrate before him rather than greet him with the usual *salām*. Also admonished were the people of the Book who had invested their rabbis and monks with the station of God. Refuge with Allah! (Tafsīr 'Usmānī)

Verses 81 - 84

وَإِذْ أَخَذَ اللَّهُ مِيثَاقَ النَّبِيِّنَ لَمَآ ءَاتَيْتُكُم مِّن كِتَٰبٍ وَحِكْمَةٍ ثُمَّ
جَآءَكُمْ رَسُولٌ مُّصَدِّقٌ لِّمَا مَعَكُمْ لَتُؤْمِنُنَّ بِهِۦ وَلَتَنصُرُنَّهُۥ قَالَ
ءَأَقْرَرْتُمْ وَأَخَذْتُمْ عَلَىٰ ذَٰلِكُمْ إِصْرِى قَالُوٓا۟ أَقْرَرْنَا قَالَ
فَاشْهَدُوا۟ وَأَنَا۠ مَعَكُم مِّنَ الشَّٰهِدِينَ ﴿٨١﴾ فَمَن تَوَلَّىٰ بَعْدَ ذَٰلِكَ
فَأُو۟لَٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْفَٰسِقُونَ ﴿٨٢﴾ أَفَغَيْرَ دِينِ اللَّهِ يَبْغُونَ وَلَهُۥٓ أَسْلَمَ مَن
فِى السَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَالْأَرْضِ طَوْعًا وَكَرْهًا وَإِلَيْهِ يُرْجَعُونَ ﴿٨٣﴾ قُلْ
ءَامَنَّا بِاللَّهِ وَمَآ أُنزِلَ عَلَيْنَا وَمَآ أُنزِلَ عَلَىٰٓ إِبْرَٰهِيمَ وَإِسْمَٰعِيلَ
وَإِسْحَٰقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ وَالْأَسْبَاطِ وَمَآ أُوتِىَ مُوسَىٰ وَعِيسَىٰ
وَالنَّبِيُّونَ مِن رَّبِّهِمْ لَا نُفَرِّقُ بَيْنَ أَحَدٍ مِّنْهُمْ وَنَحْنُ لَهُۥ مُسْلِمُونَ
﴿٨٤﴾

And when Allah made the prophets take pledge: (saying) "If I give you a book and wisdom, then comes to you a messenger verifying what is with you, you shall have to believe in him and you shall have to support him." He said, "Do you affirm and accept my covenant in this respect?" They said, "We affirm." He said, "Then, bear witness, and I am with you among the witnesses." [81]

Then those who turn back after this they are the sin-

ful. [82]

Are they, then, seeking a faith other than that of Allah while to Him alone submits whosoever there is in the heavens and the earth, willingly or unwilling, and to Him they shall be returned? [83]

Say, "We believe in Allah and in what has been revealed to us and in what was revealed to Ibrāhīm, Ismā'īl, Isḥāq, Ya'qūb and the descendants, and in what has been given to Mūsā, 'Īsā (Jesus) and the prophets, from their Lord: We do not differentiate between any of them. And to Him we submit ourselves." [84]

Commentary

Three Covenants with Allah Almighty

There are three kinds of pledges Allah Almighty has taken from His servants:

1. One of them has been mentioned in Sūrah al-A'rāf (الاعراف) under ألست بربكم : *alastu bi rabbikum* (Am I not your Lord? - 7:172) The purpose of this pledge was to bring round the whole human community to believe in the being of God and in His universal Lordship since the whole edifice of religion rests on this very corner-stone. Unless this belief is there, the lead given by reason and reflection can be of no positive use in the field of religion. Additional details on this subject will, *inshallah,* appear where due.

2. The second pledge is mentioned in verse 187 of the present Sūrah in the following words:

وَإِذْ أَخَذَ اللّٰهُ مِيثَاقَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتٰبَ لَتُبَيِّنُنَّهٗ لِلنَّاسِ وَلَا تَكْتُمُونَهٗ

And when Allah took pledge from those who were given the Book: "You shall make it known to people, and you shall not conceal it." (3:18)

This pledge was taken exclusively from the *'ulamā'* (religious scholars) of the people of the Book asking them not to hide the truth but to state it clearly and openly.

3. The third pledge has been described in the present verse:

وَإِذْ أَخَذَ اللّٰهُ مِيثَاقَ النَّبِيّٖنَ لَمَآ اٰتَيْتُكُمْ مِّنْ كِتٰبٍ وَّ حِكْمَةٍ

And when Allah made the prophets take pledge: (saying) "If I

give you a book and wisdom... (3:81)

The purpose and place of the pledge

To answer as to where did this third pledge take place, it can be said that it either took place in the spiritual world on a metaphysical plane or in our physical world by means of revelation. Both are probable. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

As for the meaning of *Mīthāq* (pledge) the Holy Qur'ān has itself mentioned its contents. However, with regard to the relevant subject of this pledge, sayings differ. Sayyidnā 'Alī and Ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنهما say that this was about the Last Prophet, صلى الله عليه وسلم . It means that Allah Almighty had taken this pledge from all prophets solely in respect of Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وسلم . The pledge was that they should, if they appear in his blessed time, believe in him, give him help and support, and leave behind instructions for their respective communities to do the same.

Ṭa'wūs, Ḥasan al-Baṣrī and Qatādah (رحمهم الله) say that this pledge was taken from the prophets so that they help and support each other mutually. (Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr)

This later statement can also be substantiated from what Allah Almighty has said in Sūrah al-Aḥzāb:

وَإِذْ أَخَذْنَا مِنَ النَّبِيِّينَ مِيثَاقَهُمْ وَمِنْكَ وَمِنْ نُّوحٍ وَّ إِبْرٰهِيمَ وَ مُوسٰى وَ عِيسَى
ابْنِ مَرْيَمَ وَأَخَذْنَا مِنْهُم مِّيثَاقًا غَلِيظًا (الاحزاب)

And when We took from the prophets their pledge, and from you, and from Nūḥ and Ibrāhīm and Mūsā and 'Īsā son of Maryam - and We took from them a firm pledge. (33:7)

This is because the pledge was taken in order that they support and attest each other. (Tafsīr Aḥmadī)

In reality, there is no contradiction in the two explanations cited above, therefore, both can be brought to bear on the meaning. (Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr)

There may be a doubt here. One may say that Allah Almighty is All-Knowing and All-Aware. He certainly knows that Muḥammad ﷺ will not be appearing in this world during the presence of any prophet. If so, asking prophets to believe in him seems to be of no use. But, a

little deliberation would bring its usefulness into clear focus. One will realize that the moment they declare a firm intention to believe, as commanded by Allah Almighty, in the prophethood of Sayyidnā Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم, the paradigm of most sublime attributes, it will be right from that point of time that they will become entitled to Divine blessings. (Sāwī vide Jalālayn)

The final and universal prophethood

In verse 81 beginning with the words: وَإِذْ أَخَذَ اللّٰهُ مِيثَاقَ النَّبِيِّيْنَ (And when Allah made the prophets take pledge:), it has been clearly stated that Allah Almighty took a firm pledge from all prophets, which was: When, during your lifetime there comes another prophet - who will certainly reaffirm the message of past prophets and their books - then, it is necessary for the prophet who is present at that time that he not only believes personally in the veracity and prophethood of the new prophet but also instructs others to do so. From this absolute rule set by the Qur'ān, it becomes very clear that Allah Almighty must have taken a pledge from the prophets about Sayyidnā Muhammad ﷺ as well, quite similar to what 'Allāmah al-Subkī has stated in his treatise entitled التعظيم والمنة فى لتومن به ولتنصرنه. He says: 'In this verse, the word, *rasūl* (messenger) refers to Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم; and there has never been a prophet from whom Allah Almighty had not taken the pledge to believe in his prophethood and provide help and support to him; and there has not been one single prophet who did not bequeath to his community the legacy of believing in and helping and supporting him; and, if the noble prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had appeared during the times of the prophets, it is he who would have been the prophet to (be obeyed by) all of them, and all of them would have been part of his community.'

This tells us that his status is not restricted to his being simply the prophet of his community; he is the prophet of prophets as well. So, he himself says in a hadīth: 'If Mūsā (Moses) was living today, he too would have had no option but to follow me.'

At yet another occasion, he said: 'When 'Īsā عليه السلام (Jesus) will come, he too will act in accordance with the noble Qur'ān and the rules set forth by your prophet'. (Tafsīr ibn Kathīr)

Thus, from here we learn that his prophethood is 'universal and in-

clusive' and that all previous religious codes stand absorbed in his Sharī'ah. What is being said here also brings into a bright focus the correct meaning of his saying: بُعِثْتُ إِلَى النَّاسِ كَافَّةً (I have been sent to all human beings). It shows that taking this hadith to mean that his prophethood extends from his time to the Day of Judgement is not correct. Instead, the time duration of his prophethood is so extensive that it begins before the prophethood of Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام as the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has himself said in a ḥadīth: كنت نبيا و آدم بين الروح والجسد (I was a prophet even when Ādam was in a state between spirit and body). That he will be the first to step forward for intercession on the Day of Resurrection, and that the entire progeny of Ādam عليه السلام will assemble under his flag and that he led the prayers at a congregation of all prophets in Bayt al-Maqdis on the Night of Ascenst (*Mi'rāj*) are all signs of this leadership which is great and universal.

Verse 85

وَمَنْ يَّبْتَغِ غَيْرَ الْإِسْلَامِ دِيْنًا فَلَنْ يُّقْبَلَ مِنْهُ ۚ وَهُوَ فِي الْاٰخِرَةِ مِنَ الْخٰسِرِيْنَ ﴿٨٥﴾

And whoever seeks a faith other than Islām, it will never be accepted from him, and he, in the Hereafter, is among the losers. [85]

Commentary

The literal meaning of 'Islām' is 'submission and obedience.' As a term 'Islām' stands for submission to that particular religion which Allah Almighty has sent through his prophets to guide human beings, because fundamental principles are the same in the religious codes of all prophets عليهم السلام .

Correspondingly, there are occasions when 'Islām' is used in that general sense, while there are other occasions when it is used exclusively to identify the Last Sharī'ah which was revealed to the Last of the Prophets عليهم السلام . Both these kinds of application are present in the Holy Qur'ān. That the past prophets called themselves 'Muslim' and their communities, the 'Muslim' community, stands proved under the authority of several wordings of the Qur'ānic text. Concurrently, this name has also been used as a particular name of the community the Last of the Prophets:

هُوَ سَمّٰكُمُ الْمُسْلِمِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَفِيْ هٰذَا

It was He who named you Muslims before, and in this (Qur'ān). (22:78)

In short, every Divine religion which came through a prophet is also called 'Islām'. Then, it is also used as a particular title for the Muslim community. Now, the question is as to which sense does the word, 'Islām', carry at this place in the Holy Qur'ān?

The correct position is that, no matter which of the two meanings is taken, it does not make much of a difference in terms of the outcome, since the name of 'Islām' given to the religion of past prophets was for a limited group of people and a specified period of time.

That was the 'Islām' of that time. Restricted to the specific group or community, that 'Islām' was not meant to serve as a universal code for all times to come. As such when a particular prophet departed and was replaced by another prophet, 'Islām' (i.e. the specific code) of that time ceased to be operative. The 'Islām' of the said time was to be what the new prophet presented. Obviously, there was no difference between these different codes in so far as the fundamentals are concerned, however, the subsidiary injunctions might differ. As for the 'Islām' given through the last Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, it will remain unabrogable and will serve as a permanent code right upto the Day of Judgment. And, in accordance with the cited rule, all previous religions stand abrogated after the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been sent.

Now, they are not Islām as such anymore. Instead, Islām is the name of that particular religion which has reached us through the Holy Prophet, Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā صلى الله عليه وسلم. Therefore, it appears in authentic *aḥādīth* that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: 'Had Mūsā been living this day, following me would have been incumbent upon him too.' In yet another *ḥadīth,* he has been reported to have said that 'Īsā, when he appears close to the Day of Resurrection, he too, inspite of holding his distinction and office of prophethood, would follow no other religious code except that of his (the Prophet of Islām).

Therefore, at this place, no matter what sense is taken of Islām - the general or the particular - the outcome of both is the same, that is,

after the coming of the Last of the Prophets, عليهم السلام, only that religion, and that alone, will be termed as Islām which has come to the world through him. On belief in that alone depends the salvation (*najāt*) of all human beings for it is their indispensable need. This explains what has been said in the present verse: 'Whoever seeks a faith other than Islām, it will never be accepted from him.'

Details about this subject have already appeared under the commentary on the verse (3:19).

Verses 86 - 91

كَيْفَ يَهْدِي اللّٰهُ قَوْمًا كَفَرُوْا بَعْدَ اِيْمَانِهِمْ وَشَهِدُوْٓا اَنَّ
الرَّسُوْلَ حَقٌّ وَّجَآءَهُمُ الْبَيِّنٰتُ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ
﴿٨٦﴾ اُولٰٓئِكَ جَزَآؤُهُمْ اَنَّ عَلَيْهِمْ لَعْنَةَ اللّٰهِ وَالْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ وَالنَّاسِ
اَجْمَعِيْنَ ﴿٨٧﴾ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَا ۚ لَا يُخَفَّفُ عَنْهُمُ الْعَذَابُ وَلَا هُمْ
يُنْظَرُوْنَ ﴿٨٨﴾ اِلَّا الَّذِيْنَ تَابُوْا مِنْۢ بَعْدِ ذٰلِكَ وَاَصْلَحُوْا ۣ فَاِنَّ
اللّٰهَ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿٨٩﴾ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا بَعْدَ اِيْمَانِهِمْ ثُمَّ
ازْدَادُوْا كُفْرًا لَّنْ تُقْبَلَ تَوْبَتُهُمْ ۚ وَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الضَّاۗلُّوْنَ ﴿٩٠﴾ اِنَّ
الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا وَمَاتُوْا وَهُمْ كُفَّارٌ فَلَنْ يُّقْبَلَ مِنْ اَحَدِهِمْ مِّلْءُ
الْاَرْضِ ذَهَبًا وَّلَوِ افْتَدٰى بِهٖ ۭ اُولٰٓئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ وَّمَا لَهُمْ
مِّنْ نّٰصِرِيْنَ ﴿٩١﴾

How shall Allah give guidance to a people who disbelieved after they had accepted Faith and testified that the Prophet is true and the clear signs had come to them? And Allah does not give guidance to the unjust people.[86] **The punishment of such people is that upon them is the curse of Allah, and of the angels and of the human beings altogether.** [87]

They remain under it forever. Neither will the punishment be lightened for them, nor will they be given respite, [88] **except those who repent afterwards and mend their ways; then, Allah is All-Forgiving, Very-**

Merciful.[89]

Those who disbelieve after having accepted Faith and then increase in disbelief, their repentance shall never be accepted. And they are the ones who have lost the right path. [90]

Those who disbelieve and die as disbelievers, even an Earth-full of gold shall never be accepted from any of them, even if one were to offer it as ransom. They are the ones for whom there is a painful punishment, and for them there are no helpers. [91]

Commentary

The removal of a doubt:

On a superficial view of the verse كَيْفَ يَهْدِى اللّٰهُ : 'How shall Allah give guidance...' (86), there emerges a doubt that whoever turns an apostate receives no guidance afterwards, although, the fact is contrary to this. There are many who, after having become apostates, re-embrace the faith and become recipients of guidance.

The answer is that the withholding of guidance mentioned here is in accordance with common usage. For instance, some criminal when punished by a certain ruler may say, 'I have been given a special treatment by the ruler with his own hands.' And in answer to him, it is said: 'Why are we going to give a special treatment to such a criminal?' That is, there is just no special treatment called for in this case, while it does not mean that such a person cannot, in any way, become deserving of special treatment even if he behaved well. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

Verse 92

لَنْ تَنَالُوا الْبِرَّ حَتّٰى تُنْفِقُوْا مِمَّا تُحِبُّوْنَ ۬ وَمَا تُنْفِقُوْا مِنْ شَىْءٍ
فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ بِهٖ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿۹۲﴾

You shall never attain righteousness unless you spend from what you love. And whatsoever you spend, Allah is fully aware of it. [92]

Sequence of Verses

In the previous verse (91), it was said that charity from disbelievers and deniers was not acceptable with Allah. In this verse, believers have been told about acceptable charity and the etiquette governing it.

Commentary

Let us first understand what بر : *birr* means and what it really signifies so that the whole sense of the verse becomes clear in our minds.

The literal and real meaning of the word بر : *birr* is the perfect fulfillment of someone's rights. It is also used in the sense of charity, performance of good deeds and nice conduct. The word بر : *barr* and بار : *bārr* is used for a person who fulfills, fully and totally, all rights due on him. The expression بَرًّا بِوَالِدَتِىْ (good to my mother - 19:32) and بَرًّا بِوَالِدَيْهِ (good to his father and mother - 19:14) has been used in the Qur'ān in this very sense. It has been used there as a personal attribute of prophets who fulfilled the rights of their parents fully and perfectly.

The plural form of this very word بر : *barr* is ابرار : *abrār* which has been used frequently in the Qur'ān. It has been said:

إِنَّ الْأَبْرَارَ يَشْرَبُوْنَ مِنْ كَأْسٍ كَانَ مِزَاجُهَا كَافُوْرًا

Surely the righteous shall drink of a cup the mixture of which is camphor - 76:5.

Again at another place it is said:

إِنَّ الْأَبْرَارَ لَفِىْ نَعِيْمٍ عَلَى الْأَرَآئِكِ يَنْظُرُوْنَ

Surely the righteous shall be in bliss, upon furnished thrones gazing - 83:22,23.

yet again there is:

وَإِنَّ الْفُجَّارَ لَفِىْ جَحِيْمٍ

And surely, the sinners shall be in hell ablaze - 82:14.

The last verse above also tells us that the antonym of بر :*birr* is فجور : *fujūr* (disobedience, sinfulness).

In al-Ādab al-Mufrad of Imām al-Bukhārī and in Ibn Mājah and the Musnad of Aḥmad, it has been reported from Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضی الله عنه that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: 'Stick to speaking the truth because truth is a companion of بر : *birr* (righteousness) and both these are in Paradise; and abstain from lying because that is a companion of *fujūr* (sin) and both these are in Hell.'

The verse 177 of Sūrah al-Baqarah (2) says:

لَيْسَ الْبِرَّ اَنْ تُوَلُّوا وُجُوْهَكُمْ قِبَلَ الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ وَلٰكِنَّ الْبِرَّ مَنْ اٰمَنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ

Righteousness is not that you turn your faces to the East and the West; but righteousness is that one believes in Allah and the last Day... 2:177.

After giving a list of good deeds in this verse, all of them have been classed as بر : *birr* (righteousness). The subject verse also tells us that, of the wide range of righteous deeds, the most preferred form of righteousness is to spend the most cherished things in the way of Allah. The verse further tells us 'you can never claim to have righteousness unless you spend out of what you hold dear.' Thus the meaning is that the perfect fulfillment of the the rights of Allah Almighty and a total self-unburdening from it cannot come to pass unless we spend in the way of Allah what we hold dear to our hearts. This very perfect fulfillment of due rights has also been translated as 'perfect good' or 'excellence in doing good' or 'the great merit'. To sum up, the sense here is that entering the ranks of the '*abrār*' (the righteous) depends on sacrificing in the way of Allah that which one holds dear.

The enthusiastic obedience of *Ṣaḥābah*

The noble Companions رضى الله عنهم اجمعين who were the first addressees of the Qur'ānic injunctions and the direct disciples of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم really loved to carry out the injunctions of the Qur'ān in letter and spirit. When this verse was revealed, each one of them surveyed as to what they loved most out of what they had. Consequently, requests started coming before the Holy Prophet ﷺ that these be spent in the way of Allah. Sayyidnā Abū Ṭalḥah رضى الله عنه was the richest person among the *Anṣar* (the helping residents) of Madinah. He was the owner of a fruit farm located right across the mosque of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. It had a well called *Bi'r Ḥā'*. Now, in place of this farm, there is, in front of Bāb al-Majīdī, a building known as Istifā Manzil where pilgrims to Madinah stay. But, in a corner north-east from it, this *Bi'r Ḥā'* still exhists by the same name.[1] The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم used to visit this farm once in a while and

1. This building and well have now been demolished due to the extension of the Mosque. (Translator)

drink water drawn from *Bi'r Ḥā'*. He liked the water from this well. This farm belonging to Sayyidnā Ṭalḥah was very precious, fertile, and the dearest of all that he owned. After the revelation of this verse, he presented himself before the Holy Prophet ﷺ and said: 'I hold *Bi'r Ḥā'* the dearest of all that I own. I wish to 'spend' it in the way of Allah. I request you to use it for whatever purpose you like.' He said: 'That farm is a high-yield property. I think it is appropriate that you distribute it among your kith and kin.' Sayyidnā Abū Ṭalḥah, accepting the suggestion made by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم distributed it among his relatives and cousins (al-Bukhārī and Muslim). This ḥadīth also tells us that charity is not restricted to spending on the poor and the needy, but it is equally charitable and meritorious to give it to one's own family and relatives.

Sayyidnā Zayd ibn Ḥāritha رضى الله عنه came with a horse and said that he loved it more than anything else he owned and that he wanted to 'spend' it in the way of Allah. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم accepted it. But, after having taken it from him, he gave it to his son Sayyidnā Usāmah رضى الله عنه . Zayd ibn Ḥāritha was somewhat disappointed about that thinking that his charity has found its way back into his own home. But, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم comforted him by saying: 'Allah Almighty has accepted this charity of yours'. (Tafsīr Mazharī vide Ibn Jarīr, and others)

Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنه had a bond-maid he liked most. He freed her for the sake of Allah.

Similarly, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar had a bond-maid he loved. He freed her in the name of Allah.

In short, the gist of the verse under reference is that the complete fulfillment of the rights of Allah, the perfect good and excellence in doing good can be achieved only when a person spends something out of his dearest belongings in the way of Allah. Worthy of our attention and retention are some of the following aspects highlighted in this verse:

The word *birr* in this verses is inclusive of all charity, obligatory or voluntary:

1. First of all, this verse motivates spending in the way of Allah.

Some commentators take this to mean obligatory charity such as *zakāh* while others take this to be voluntary (*Nafl*: supererogatory) charity. But, according to a consensus of respected researchers in the field, it has been established that its sense is general and includes both obligatory and voluntary charities. Then there are the recorded actions of the noble Companions, as cited above, which bear witness that these charitable initiatives taken by them were voluntary.

Therefore, the sense of the verse is that you give in the way of Allah whatever it may be, the obligatory *zakāh* or the voluntary charity, but that perfect excellence and merit will blossom out from them only when you spend in the way of Allah what you like and love. Not that you pick out the spare, the useless or worthless things as if you were trying to get rid of the burden of charity and as if it was some sort of punitive tax on you. This subject has been taken up more clearly in another verse of the Qur'ān which is as follows:

يَاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اَنْفِقُوْا مِنْ طَيِّبٰتِ مَا كَسَبْتُمْ وَ مِمَّآ اَخْرَجْنَا لَكُمْ مِّنَ الْاَرْضِ
وَ لَا تَيَمَّمُوا الْخَبِيْثَ مِنْهُ تُنْفِقُوْنَ وَلَسْتُمْ بِاٰخِذِيْهِ اِلَّآ اَنْ تُغْمِضُوْا فِيْهِ

O those who believe, spend of the the good things you have earned and of what We have brought forth for you from the earth and do not opt for a bad thing spending only from there while you are not going to accept it at all unless you close your eyes to it... - 2:267.

So, the outcome is that picking out the bad and the useless to give in charity is unacceptable; contrary to that is the acceptable charity which earns full merit and which is nothing but what is spent out of one's dear belongings.

Moderation in charity:

2. The second ruling comes out of the hint made in the word مِمَّا (from what) in the verse. That is, the purpose is not to spend away everything one likes and loves *en masse* in the way of Allah. Instead, the purpose is to spend whatever has to be spent from the good things. Spending in this way will bring the full reward of charity.

In charity, what counts is sincerity:

3. The third ruling is that spending the cherished is not tied to spending something of high value. Instead, by spending what one likes

and holds dear, no matter how small it may be in quantity or cost, one would still become deserving of this '*birr*' or righteousness. Ḥasan al-Baṣrī says, 'Whoever spends sincerely for the good pleasure of Allah, even if that be a single date-fruit alone, that too is good enough to make one deserving of the great merit and perfect righteousness promised in the verse.'

Alternative for those who have nothing to spend:

4. On the outside, it appears from the verse that poor people who do not have much to spend will remain deprived of the great good and righteousness mentioned here. It is because it has been said in the verse that this great good cannot be achieved without spending one's cherished belonging while the poor and the needy just do not have anything through which they could reach the station of righteousness. But, a little deliberation would show that the verse does not mean that those who wish to have the great good and the great merit cannot achieve that by any means other than that of spending out of their cherished possessions. Contrary to that, the fact is that this great good can be achieved by some other means as well, such as, *'Ibādah, Dhikr, Tilāwah* of the Qur'ān and abundance of *nawāfil.* Therefore, the poor and the needy can also become the recipients of this great good through other means as it has been clearly explained in Ḥadīth narrations.

What is meant by things you love?

5. This is the fifth question. Another verse of the Qur'ān tells us that something liked and loved means that the thing is working for him and that he needs it, not that it be spare and useless. The Holy Qur'an says: وَيُطْعِمُونَ الطَّعَامَ عَلَىٰ حُبِّهِ مِسْكِينًا which means that "the favoured servants of Allah feed the poor although they need it themselves." (76:08) Similarly, in yet another verse, this subject has been further clarified as follows: وَيُؤْثِرُونَ عَلَىٰ أَنْفُسِهِمْ وَلَوْ كَانَ بِهِمْ خَصَاصَةٌ They (the favoured servants of Allah) prefer others over their ownselves even though they themselves are in need. (59:09)

Spending the extra and the spare too is not devoid of merit:

6. The sixth ruling given in this verse is that entry into the fold of perfect good, great merit and ranks of the righteous depends on spending one's cherished possessions in the way of Allah. But, it does not

necessarily follow that there is just no merit in store for one who does spend out of what is extra to his needs. On the contrary, as it is said towards the end of the verse: وَمَا تُنفِقُوا مِن شَيْءٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ بِهِ عَلِيمٌ that is, 'And whatsoever you spend, Allah is fully aware of it,' the sense of the text in the verse is that while the achievement of the perfect good and entry into the ranks of the righteous, no doubt, depends on spending cherished possessions specially; however, no charity is devoid of merit irrespective of whether one spends the cherished or the extra. But, what is certainly undesirable and prohibited is getting into the habit of always picking out the extra and the bad to spend in the way of Allah. But, a person who not only spends good things he likes in charity but also gives away things which are extra to his needs, e.g., left-over food or used clothing, defective utensils or articles in use, does commit no sin by including these in his acts of charity. He would definitely earn a reward for those too. As far as spending of cherished possessions is concerned, he would thereupon achieve the great good and find his entry into the ranks of the righteous as well.

Also stated in this last sentence of the verse is that Allah is fully aware of the real quality of what man spends and knows whether or not it is dear to him, and if he is spending it for the good pleasure of Allah, or for pretense and publicity. The mere verbal claim by somebody that he is spending what he cherishes in the way of Allah is not enough for this purpose. Keeping vigil over him is the One, the all-Knowing, the all-Aware who is cognizant of the secrets of the heart - He is watching and knows what is the true worth of the spending in His way.

Verses 93 - 95

كُلُّ الطَّعَامِ كَانَ حِلًّا لِّبَنِيٓ إِسْرَآءِيلَ إِلَّا مَا حَرَّمَ إِسْرَآءِيلُ
عَلَىٰ نَفْسِهِۦ مِن قَبْلِ أَن تُنَزَّلَ التَّوْرَىٰةُ ۗ قُلْ فَأْتُوا بِالتَّوْرَىٰةِ
فَاتْلُوهَآ إِن كُنتُمْ صَٰدِقِينَ ﴿٩٣﴾ فَمَنِ افْتَرَىٰ عَلَى اللَّهِ
الْكَذِبَ مِنۢ بَعْدِ ذَٰلِكَ فَأُولَٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الظَّٰلِمُونَ ﴿٩٤﴾ قُلْ صَدَقَ
اللَّهُ ۗ فَاتَّبِعُوا مِلَّةَ إِبْرَٰهِيمَ حَنِيفًا ۖ وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ

﴿٩٥﴾

Every (kind of) food was lawful for the children of Isrā'īl, except what Isrā'īl had made unlawful for himself well before the Torah was revealed. Say, "Then, bring the Torah and recite it, if you are true." [93]

Then, after all this, those who forge the lie and attribute it to Allah, they are the transgressors. [94]

Say, "Allah has spoken the truth. So, follow the Faith of Ibrāhīm, the upright -- and he was not one of the associators." [95]

Commentary

In the verses appearing above, there is a continuity of arguments against positions taken by the people of the Book. At some places, it concerns Jews and at others, the Christians. One such argument, which has been reported in Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī on the authority of Wāḥidī and al-Kalbī, recounts the incident when the Holy Prophet ﷺ stated his adherence to the community of Abraham with reference to all fundamentals of the religious code, and most of the subsidiaries, the Jews objected by saying: 'You eat camel meat and partake of its milk although these were unlawful for Abraham.' The Holy Prophet ﷺ said: 'No, this was lawful for him.' The Jews said: 'All that we consider unlawful has continued to be unlawful since the days of Naoh and Abraham to the point that this unlawfulness reached us.' Thereupon, Allah Almighty revealed the verse: كُلُّ الطَّعَامِ كَانَ حِلًّا لِّبَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ: 'Every (kind of) food was lawful for the children of Isrā'īl - 93' to refute the Jewish claim in which it is said that before the revelation of Torah, all things were lawful for the children of Isrā'īl except the camel meat which Isrā'īl (Jacob) عليه السلام himself had denied to eat for a particular reason, and then it remained unlawful for his progeny also.

The fact, as narrated by Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās in an authentic report, is that Jacob suffered from Sciatica. He had taken a vow that he would abandon what he liked most in what he ate if Allah Almighty cured him of the disease. He was cured and camel meat was what he liked most, so he abandoned it. (See Al-Ḥākim and al-Tirmidhī as quoted by Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī). Then, it so happened that this prohibition which started because of a vow continued among the Banī Isrā'īl as a divine injunc-

tion. It seems their code recognized a vow as a cause of unlawfulness of something lawful, like in our own Sharī'ah, a vow may make the permissible acts as obligatory. However, a vow or pledge which renders things unlawful is, in reality, an oath which is not permissible in our Sharī'ah. In fact, in such a case, it is obligatory to break the oath and make amends by making *Kaffārah.* This is in accordance with what Allah Almighty has said in the verse لِمَ تُحَرِّمُ مَآ اَحَلَّ اللّٰهُ لَكَ (... why do you forbid what Allah has made lawful for you? - 66:1) (See al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr)

Verse 96

اِنَّ اَوَّلَ بَيۡتٍ وُّضِعَ لِلنَّاسِ لَلَّذِىۡ بِبَكَّةَ مُبٰرَكًا وَّهُدًى لِّلۡعٰلَمِيۡنَ ﴿۹۶﴾

The first house set up for the people is surely the one in Makkah having blessings and guidance for all worlds. [96]

Commentary:

The above verse points out to the distinction and superiority of the House of Allah, the Ka'bah, as compared to the houses, and even mosques, of the whole world. There are several reasons for this status, which have been mentioned in this verse, namely:

1. Among the true houses of worship in this world, the Ka'bah enjoys the distinction of being the first.

2. It is full of blessings.

3. It is a source of guidance for the entire world.

The gist of the words used in the verse is that the first House designated for people by Allah is none other than the one which is in Makkah. It means that the Ka'bah of Makkah is the first House of Worship in this world. One possible interpretation of this phrase may be that the first house of all the houses of the world was made for Divine worship exclusively, in which case, there would have been no place of worship or place of residence prior to it. Ādam عليه السلام was a prophet of Allah. Given his stature and the eminent position as Allah's vicegerent, it is likely that he, soon after his appearance on the earth, elected to first build the House of Allah even before building his own

residence. It is for this reason that Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar, Mujāhid, Qatādah and others from among the Companions and their successors are of the opinion that the Ka'bah is the first house of the world. Then, it is also possible that houses where people lived may have already been made earlier but this may have been the first ever House made exclusively for worship. This very view has been reported from Sayyidnā 'Alī رضى الله عنه.

Al-Baihaqi, in his book, Dalā'il al-Nubūwwah, has reported on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Amr ibn al'Ās رضى الله عنه that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: 'After the arrival of Sayyidnā Ādam and Sayyidah Ḥawwā' عليهما السلام into the mortal world, Allah Almighty commanded them through angel Jibra'īl that they should build the House of Allah (the Ka'bah). After they had fulfilled the command, they were asked to go round it (in *ṭawāf*). They were told that they were the first among people and this house was the first House (of worship) appointed for people (Ibn Kathīr).

As it appears in some reports, this structure of the Ka'bah built by Sayyidnā Ādam was there upto the time of Sayyidnā Nūḥ. It collapsed during the Flood and its traces were obliterated. Following that, it was re-built by Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام on the same foundations. When the structure collapsed again due to some accident, a group from the tribe of Jurhum raised it once again. When yet another collapse came, the Amalkites rebuilt it. When it collapsed close to the early period of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, the Quraysh built it all over again in which the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم himself participated and helped place the Black Stone with his blessed hands. But, the structure raised by the Quraysh was a little different from the original foundation laid down by Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm in as much as they had left out a section of the House of Allah which is known as Ḥaṭīm. There were two doors in the original Abrahamic structure of the Ka'bah, one for entry and another on the back for exit. The Quraysh retained just the one door in the east (for entry and exit).

The third change they made was to raise the level of the entry door much higher than the ground level of the House of Allah so that everybody could not go in there easily; this was to restrict the entry only to those who were permitted by Quraysh. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم

said to Sayyidah 'A'ishah رضى الله عنها : 'I wish I could demolish the present structure and raise it all over again exactly in accordance with the Abrahimic foundation. By doing this I shall be correcting the arbitrary deviation from the Abrahimic foundation made by the Quraysh, but this action is likely to create a misunderstanding among Muslims who are new and whose knowledge is not yet perfect, therefore, I shall leave it as it is for the time being.' The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم did not live for very long to implement his wishes in his lifetime.

But, Sayyidna 'Abdullah ibn Zubayr رضى الله عنه , the nephew of Sayyidah 'A'ishah رضى الله عنها had heard this saying of the Holy Prophet ﷺ . When he came to rule Makkah al-Mukarramah following the *Khulafa al-Rashidin*, he had the structure of the House of Allah demolished and had it rebuilt in accordance with the saying of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and the original foundation of Sayyidna Ibrahim عليه السلام . He ruled Makkah al-Mu'azzamah for a brief period only. The tyrant of the Muslim community, Hajjaj ibn Yusuf invaded Makkah and Hadrat 'Abdullah was martyred. After assuming control of the government, and abhorrent as he was to the idea that this feat of 'Abdullah ibn Zubayr remains a source of fame for the martyred ruler, he started a smear campaign that 'Abdullah ibn Zubayr was wrong in what he did and that the Ka'bah should be kept the way it was left to posterity by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم . Using this excuse, he once again demolished the structure of the House of Allah and had it built anew similar to the one made earlier by the Quraysh during the days of *Jahiliyyah*. Some Muslim rulers who succeeded Hajjaj ibn Yusuf intended, on the strength of the aforementioned hadith, to rebuild the House of Allah all over again in accordance with the hadith of the Holy Prophet ﷺ . But, the master-jurist of that period, Sayyidna Imam Malik ibn Anas gave a *fatwa* to the effect that re-demolishing and re-building the House of Allah at this stage will render the House of Allah a plaything in the hands of rulers who will follow. Every ruler who comes next will do exactly this to earn fame for himself. Therefore, it is appropriate that it be left the way it is. The entire *ummah* accepted it. This is the reason why the structure built by Hajjaj ibn Yusuf is what remains even to this day. There have been damages, dilapidations and the process of repairs has continued ever since.

These narrations, first of all, tell us that the Ka'bah is the first house of the world, or at least, the first house of worship. While the Holy Qur'ān does mention that the House of Allah was built by Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm and Ismā'il following His will and command, there are simultaneous indicators suggesting that these revered prophets did not go through the initial layout for its construction. Instead, they built it in accordance with previous foundations, because the real foundation of the Ka'bah was already there. From what is said in the Holy Qur'ān, i.e. وَاِذْ يَرْفَعُ اِبْرٰهِيْمُ الْقَوَاعِدَ مِنَ الْبَيْتِ وَاِسْمٰعِيْلُ (and when Ibrāhīm was raising up the foundations of the House along with Ismā'il - 2:127) we get an indication that 'the *Qawā'id* or the foundations of the House of Allah were already there. It appears in Sūrah al-Ḥajj: وَاِذْ بَوَّاْنَا لِاِبْرٰهِيْمَ مَكَانَ الْبَيْتِ (and when we settled for Ibrāhīm the site of the House - 22:26)

This too is suggestive of the fact that the site of the House of Allah had continued as pre-determined since earlier times. The first verse lends support to the view that its foundations were already there.

When Sayydinā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام was commanded to build the House of Allah, as in some reports, he was led by an angel on to the site of the Ka'bah and its previously existing foundations hidden under sand dunes.

In any case, the verse under reference does prove one of the merits of the Ka'bah, that is, it is the first ever house or place of worship. It has been reported in a ḥadīth from the *Ṣaḥīḥayn* that Sayyidnā Ab Dharr رضى الله عنه asked the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم , 'Which is the first ever *masjid* in the world?' He said, 'al-Masjid al-Ḥarām.' He submitted again, 'Which *masjid* comes after that?' He said, 'Masjid Bayt al-Maqdis.' He asked once again, 'What time span separates their building?' He said, 'Forty years.'

In this *ḥadīth*, it is in relation to the new edifice of the House of Allah that the intervening period between its construction and the initial construction of Bayt al-Maqdis has been determined. As a matter of fact, there are reports which prove that the initial construction of Bayt al-Maqdis was undertaken by Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام forty years after the construction of the Ka'bah. Then comes the construction of Bayt al-Maqdis by Sayyidnā Sulaymān عليه السلام . This too was not a new structure with new foundations, like the Ka'bah. Instead, Sayyid-

nā Sulaymān عليه السلام rebuilt it on the original Abrahimic foundations. Thus, there remains no contradiction between reports.

The Ka'bah has always been an object of reverence and respect. This fact is pointed out in the expression وُضِعَ لِلنَّاسِ (set up for the people) in this verse under discussion hinted therein is that the respect and honour in which this House of worship is held will not be limited to a particular nation or group. Instead, the whole humanity will hold it in respect. Allah Almighty has placed a built-in aura of dignity and awe in its presence which draws in the hearts of people automatically.

Here, the word '*Bakkah*' means 'Makkah al-Mu'azzamah'. It does not matter whether you say that the letter '*mīm*' has been substituted for '*bā*' since, in common Arab usage, '*mīm*' is substituted for '*bā*', or simply say that '*Bakkah*' is an alternate name for 'Makkah'.

The Blessings of the Ka'bah

The second merit of Baytullah (the Ka'bah) stated here in this verse is that it is blessed. The word, '*mubārak*' has been derived from '*barakah*' which means 'to grow' and 'to sustain'. You can look at this growth factor from two angles. Something may grow in a way that it visibly increases in quantity, but the other possible way of growing is that it adds nothing noteworthy to its quantity, yet it turns out to be so useful in so many situations that it would have usually needed much more to do the same job. In that sense this too could be regarded as 'growth' or 'increase'.

The Ka'bah is full of blessings outwardly and inwardly. The outward blessings it has are quite obvious. Inspite of Makkah and its environs being a desert, dry and barren, all sorts of fruits and vegetables and items of need are available in all seasons and at all times. Not only that these are enough for the people of Makkah, it is much more than that. These suffice for all visitors from everywhere in the world. And everyone knows the volume of visitors, specially during the Hajj season, when hundreds and thousands of people from the farthest corners of the world assemble there whose count outnumbers the residents of Makkah by at least four or five times. This huge multitude of people stays there, not for a few days, but for months together. Even, apart from the Ḥajj season, there is hardly a time of the year when thousands of people from outside do not come in and go out of here. It

may be noted that, during the Ḥajj season particularly when hundreds and thousands of people from outside assemble there, it has never happened that articles of use could have gone out of the market and become unavailable. Even, animals of sacrifice which are slaughtered there by each and every person, at least on the average of one per person, and there are some who sacrifice more, are always available there. It is not that special arrangements are made to import these from other countries. In the words of the Holy Qur'ān, i.e. يُجْبَىٰ إِلَيْهِ ثَمَرَاتُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ (Brought toward it are fruits of everything - 28:57), there is a clear indication of this phenomena.

This was a view of the outward blessings which, of course, are not the ultimate objective. The spiritual, the inward blessings are so numerous that it is impossible to count them. There are important *'ibādāt,* the acts of worship, which are special to the Ka'bah. The great reward and the spiritual blessings that come from them totally revolve around the Baytullah, such as the Ḥajj and 'Umra. Then, there are some other *'ibādāt* the merit of which increases several degrees when done in al-Masjid al-Ḥarām. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said that a man offering *ṣalāh* at his home will get *thawāb* for one *ṣalāh*; and if he does that in the *masjid* of his locality, he will get the reward for twenty five *ṣalāhs*; and one who does that in a *Jāmi'* (big congregational mosque) will get the reward for five hundred *ṣalāhs;* and should he offer his *ṣalāh* in al-Masjid al-Aqṣā, he will get the reward for one thousand *ṣalāhs*; and in my *Masjid*, he gets the *thawāb* for fifty thousand *ṣalāhs*, while in al-Masjid al-Ḥarām, that of one hundred thousand *ṣalāhs*. (This narration has been reported by Ibn Mājah and Ṭaḥāwī and others).

As far as the merits of *Ḥajj* are concerned, Muslims generally know the Ḥadīth which declares that a Muslim who performs his Ḥajj obligations correctly is so cleansed of his past sins as if he was born on that day, all pure and pristine. Obviously, all these are spiritual blessings of the Baytullah. These very blessings have been identified by the word هُدًى towards the end of the verse: مُبَارَكًا وَهُدًى لِّلْعَالَمِينَ (having blessings and guidance for all worlds).

Verse 97

فِيْهِ اٰيٰتٌۢ بَيِّنٰتٌ مَّقَامُ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ ۚ۬ وَمَنْ دَخَلَهٗ كَانَ اٰمِنًا ۭ وَلِلّٰهِ عَلَى النَّاسِ حِجُّ الْبَيْتِ مَنِ اسْتَطَاعَ اِلَيْهِ سَبِيْلًا ۭ وَمَنْ كَفَرَ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَنِىٌّ عَنِ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿۹۷﴾

In it there are clear signs: The station of Ibrāhīm! And whoever enters there is secure. And as a right of Allah, it is obligatory on the people to perform Ḥajj of the House -- whoever has the ability to manage (his) way to it. And if one disbelieves, then Allah is independent of all the worlds. [97]

Commentary

Three distinctions of Baytullah

Related in this verse are distinctions and merits of the House of Allah, that is, the Ka'bah. Firstly, it has many signs of Allah's power, one of them being the station of Ibrāhīm (Maqāmu Ibrāhīm). Secondly, one who enters there becomes a recepient of peace and remains protected; he cannot be killed by anybody. Thirdly, it is obligatory on all Muslims around the world that they make the Ḥajj of the House of Allah, subject to the condition that one has the means and the ability to reach as far as there.

The signs of Allah's Power:

Since the time the foundations of Baytullah were laid out, Allah Almighty has, because of its enormous blessings provided protection to the people of Makkah against enemy attacks. When Abrahah invaded Makkah with his army of elephants, Allah Almighty, in His most perfect power, destroyed them through birds. Those who enter the sacred precincts of Makkah, men and women, even animals, stand protected.

When there is rainfall on a certain side of Baytullah, it has been observed that countries situated on that side are favoured with substantial rainfalls. Another unusual sign relates to the Jamarāt, the granite pillars on which every pilgrim throws seven pebbles each, everyday for three days. A couple of million or more pilgrims go there every year. Had these pebbles remained there, the Jamarāt would have been buried under a mountain of pebbles. The fact is that any huge de-

posits of pebbles are not visible there after the passage of three days of Ḥajj, except some scattered pebbles the cause of which is, as stated by the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم, that angels pick up these pebbles and the pebbles left there belong to people whose Ḥajj is not accepted for some reason. This is why it is forbidden to pick up pebbles lying near the Jamarāt and throw them on the pillars, as part of Ḥajj rites, since they are from the unaccepted ones.

In his comments on this phenomenon, Shaykh Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī has said in al-Khaṣā'iṣ al-Kubrā that there are some miracles of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم which still live and stand, and shall continue right through to the Day of judgement and everyone shall see them. One of these, of course, is the unmatched presence of the Holy Qur'ān itself which cannot be matched even if the whole world joined its forces. This inability persists all the same as it was during the blessed days of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم and shall continue to persist like that right through to the Day of Judgement. Every Muslim, no matter of what period of time, shall be able to challenge the whole world: فَأْتُوا بِسُورَةٍ مِّن مِّثْلِهِ (Then, produce a Sūrah like it -10:38).

So is the miracle of Jamarāt as stated above. Similarly there is the statement of the Prophet علیہ السلام in respect of Jamarāt. He has stated that pebbles thrown on these pillars are picked up by the angels in a manner invisible to mankind. The few pebbles left belong to those unfortunate people whose pilgrimage is not accepted by Allah. The Prophet's statement has stood the test of time for centuries in a row and it will continue upto the Great Day. This is one of the continuing miracles of the Prophet علیہ السلام and a major sign of Allah in respect of the revered house of Ka'bah.

The Station of Ibrāhīm :

From among the signs associated with the Ka'bah there is the great sign - The 'Maqāmu Ibrāhīm' which has been mentioned separately in its own right. The Station of Ibrāhīm is the name of the stone on which Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm علیہ السلام stood while building the edifice of Baytullah (the Ka'bah). There are narrations reporting that the stone raised itself along with the rising level of construction and came down automatically when so required. The footprints of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm علیہ السلام are still there on this stone. Obviously, that an inert and

unconscious stone is invested with sudden intelligent volition to respond to functional needs and elevate itself, or come down, or that it is given the ability to assume the plasticity of wax and let a perfect print of feet appear on its surface, are all signs of the most perfect power of Allah reflecting the superior merit of Baytullah.

This stone used to be on the ground close to the door of the Baytullah. When came the Qur'ānic command: وَاتَّخِذُوْا مِنْ مَّقَامِ إِبْرٰهِيْمَ مُصَلًّى (And make the station of Ibrāhīm a place of prayer - 2:125), this stone was removed from there, considering the convenience of those who made *tawâf,* and placed in front of the Baytullah, but at some distance outside the *maṭāf* (the area where *ṭawāf* is made) close to *Bi'r Zamzam* (the well of *Zamzam*, the original site of which is now marked with a black marble circle on the floor of the Baytullah with the legend inlaid in Arabic). Later, it was secured in a small structure behind which the two post-*ṭawāf raka'āt* were offered. The present position is that the station of Ibrāhīm has been placed securely in a strong metal-crystal casing, but it is the particular stone inside it which is the 'Maqāmu Ibrāhīm'. Offering the post-*ṭawāf ṣalāh* comprising two *raka'āt* behind or close to it is more merit-worthy. But the appellation, 'Maqāmu Ibrāhīm' taken in a literal sense, covers the entire al-Masjid al-Ḥarām, the Sacred Mosque. Therefore, Muslim jurists have ruled that offering the two *raka'at* after *ṭawāf* anywhere within the Sacred Mosque would satisfy one's obligation.

'Whoever enters Baytullah is secure':

The second peculiarity of the Ka'bah mentioned in the verse is that 'whoever enters it is secure'. This statement has different aspects. Firstly, it is true in the legal sense, for Allah Almighty has ordained that one who enters there should not be molested or killed; even if a person kills someone or commits some other crime and goes into the sanctuary, he too should not be punished in there. Instead of that, he should be compelled to come out of the *Ḥaram* and when he does come out of the *Ḥaram*, the punishment due will then be given. This is how an entrant to *Ḥaram* gets the protection of Divine law.

The second form of security provided to the entrants of *Ḥaram* is factual. In the very design of Divine creation, Allah Almighty has caused awe and reverence for Baytullah to take roots in the hearts of

people. Even the Arab tribes of *Jāhiliyyah,* inspite of all their evil practices, were ready to sacrifice their lives to uphold the honour of Baytullāh. That they were all too wild and warring is well-known, yet they held the *Ḥaram* in such esteem that a son whose father was killed would say nothing to the killer and quietly move away from him inspite of his burning rage for revenge.

The only time fighting was allowed within the *Ḥaram* area was for a few hours through a revelation from Allah Almighty. The occasion was the conquest of Makkah and the permission was restricted to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in order that he could cleanse the Baytullāh and serve an important objective of faith. Soon after the conquest, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم made an express announcement to this effect and stressed that the original unlawfulness of fighting in the *Ḥaram* continues to be valid for ever.

As far as the case of Ḥajjāj ibn Yūsuf is concerned who, after the time of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم , took armed action against Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Zubayr رضى الله عنه in Makkah, resorting to killings and terror. Since his action was a grave sin and a flagrant violation of law and Ka'bah's sanctity, in the sight of the entire community which hated him for what he did, therefore, it does not affect the divine declaration of Ka'bah's sanctity. It is also difficult to say that he violated the built-in sanctity of Baytullah as such intentionally, for Ḥajjāj himself did not believe in the lawfulness of this action of his; he knew that he was committing a serious crime but he became overwhelmed by political and administrative considerations.

However, the truth is that the Muslim community at large has always held the *Ḥaram* and Baytullāh in the highest possible esteem and has always regarded fighting or quarrelling in the sacred precincts as one of the most ugly sins. This is a unique mark of Baytullah, universally and exclusively.

The obligation of Ḥajj: A Distinction of Baytullāh

Allah Almighty has made the Ḥajj of Baytullāh an obligation subject to the condition that one has the necessary means and ability to reach there. Having 'means' can be explained by saying that one should have resources surplus to his basic needs which could help him take care of the cost of travel, to Baytullāh and back home, and the

expenses incurred during stay in the Holy Land. It is also necessary that his 'means' should be good enough to cover the expenses of his family until his return, for this is an standing obligation on him. Then, one should not be physically handicapped, being unable to see, or use hands and feet, for a handicapped person would not have the ability to go that far and complete the many requirements of the Ḥajj.

As women are not legally permitted to travel without a *Maḥram* (marriage with whom is prohibited), they would be considered 'able' to embark on their Hajj if they are travelling with a *Maḥram* making his Ḥajj whether the *Maḥram* is bearing his own expenses or the woman pays for his expenses as well. Similarly, the route taken to reach the Ḥajj site should also be secure since this too is part of the condition of 'ability'. If peaceful conditions do not exist on the Ḥajj route and there is an acute danger to life and property, then, it would mean an absence of the 'ability' to perform Ḥajj.

Literally, Ḥajj means 'to intend'. What it means in terms of prescribed religious observance is already stated in the Holy Qur'ān itself, that is, the *ṭawāf* of the Ka'bah, the stay in 'Arafāt, and in Muzdalifah. Remaining details have been made clear by the Holy Prophet ﷺ through his words and deeds. So, after the announcement that the Ḥajj of Baytullāh is an obligation, it was said:

وَمَنْ كَفَرَ فَإِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَنِيٌّ عَنِ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ

And if one disbelieves, then Allah is independent of all the worlds.

Included here, undoubtedly, is the person who intentionally rejects the belief that Ḥajj is obligatory. It is obvious that such a person cannot be considered a Muslim. He is a disbeliever indeed, for the description: "And if one disbelieves" fits him clearly and comprehensively. Then, comes the case of one who does believe that Ḥajj is an obligation, yet he does not, inspite of having the means and the ability, perform it. He too, in a way, is no less a denier of the Divine command. In his case, the words: "and if one disbelieves" will apply in the form of admonition and warning since this person is acting like disbelievers who do not perform Ḥajj. In the process, such a person acts just like one of them.

This is why Muslim jurists, رحمهم الله, have said that this is a severe warning to those who do not perform Ḥajj inspite of having the means and the ability to do so and thus, by this heedless act of theirs, they become the likes of disbelievers. Let us seek refuge with Allah from such a fate.

Verses 98 - 101

قُلْ يٰٓاَهْلَ الْكِتٰبِ لِمَ تَكْفُرُوْنَ بِاٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ ۖ وَاللّٰهُ شَهِيْدٌ عَلٰى
مَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿٩٨﴾ قُلْ يٰٓاَهْلَ الْكِتٰبِ لِمَ تَصُدُّوْنَ عَنْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ
مَنْ اٰمَنَ تَبْغُوْنَهَا عِوَجًا وَّ اَنْتُمْ شُهَدَآءُ ۗ وَ مَا اللّٰهُ بِغَافِلٍ
عَمَّا تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿٩٩﴾ يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اِنْ تُطِيْعُوْا فَرِيْقًا مِّنَ
الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوا الْكِتٰبَ يَرُدُّوْكُمْ بَعْدَ اِيْمَانِكُمْ كٰفِرِيْنَ ﴿١٠٠﴾
وَكَيْفَ تَكْفُرُوْنَ وَاَنْتُمْ تُتْلٰى عَلَيْكُمْ اٰيٰتُ اللّٰهِ وَ فِيْكُمْ
رَسُوْلُهٗ ۗ وَمَنْ يَّعْتَصِمْ بِاللّٰهِ فَقَدْ هُدِيَ اِلٰى صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيْمٍ
﴿١٠١﴾

Say, "O people of the Book, why do you disbelieve the signs of Allah while Allah is witness to what you do?"[98]

Say, "O people of the Book, why do you prevent those who believe from the way of Allah seeking crookedness in it while you are witnesses (of the truth)? And Allah is not unaware of what you do." [99]

O those who believe, if you obey a group from those who have been given the Book, (before you) they will turn you infidels after your having believed. [100] **And how do you disbelieve while it is to you that the verses of Allah are recited, and present amidst you is His Messenger? And whoever holds on to Allah, he is surely guided to the straight path.** [101]

Commentary

Several verses earlier, the text was dealing with the people of the Book, their false beliefs and their doubts. Then, appeared the mention

of Baytullāh and Ḥajj. Now once again, the people of the Book are the addressees. These verses relate to a particular event. There was a Jew, Shammās ibn Qays, who harboured a chronic malice against Muslims. Once, when he saw two Anṣār tribes, Aws and Khazraj, gathered together amiably at one place, his malevolence got the better of him and he went about looking for ways to sow seeds of discord between them. Finally, he set up a man suggesting to him that these two tribes have fought a much long-drawn war in pre-Islām days and both parties had recited poetical compositions highlighting their tribal pride. So why not recite these self-congratulating poetical compositions while both sit together. The moment these poems were recited there, emotions rose high, there were charges and counter-charges to the limit that the place and time of a fresh war was all set. When the Holy Prophet ﷺ heard about this, he came to them and said: 'What is all this? Here I am present amidst you and you are doing this after having become Muslims and after having become united and friendly with each other. This is sheer ignorance. Do you want, in this state of yours, to revert to *kufr*?'

They took the warning to their heart. They knew this was a slip caused by Satan. They embraced each other, wept and repented. These verses were revealed in the background of this event.

This event appears in Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī as narrated by Ibn Isḥāq while there are others who narrate it from Zaid ibn Aslam. This subject continues through several verses after this. Here, the verses begin with an admonition to the people of the Book who had engineered this intrigue, and this admonition has been done with great eloquence when, before admonishing them for what they did, they were taken to task for their disbelief as well, which meant that it would have made better sense if they themselves had taken to the right path, and become Muslims, rather than devoting themselves to distract others to the wrong track. Following this, Muslims have been addressed, and served with a word of caution, specially when they have by their side, the Book and the Messenger of Allah, two powerful, never-failing sources, which would help them stay firm in their belief.

The expression وَمَنْ يَّعْتَصِمْ بِاللّٰهِ translated as 'And whoever holds on to Allah' means one who stays firm in, and totally committed to, his *'īmān*

or faith, for *'i'tisām'*, the act of holding on to Allah firmly, denotes that one should affirm His Being and His Attributes, be staunchly faithful to what He has ordained, and in the process, be sure not to be lured into supporting the position of any adversary whoever that may be. One who acts in this manner 'is surely guided to the straight path'. It means that such a person <u>is</u> on the 'straight path', and being on the 'straight path' is the key to all that is good and beneficial which the Word of Allah promises to him.

Verses 102 - 103

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ حَقَّ تُقٰتِهٖ وَلَا تَمُوْتُنَّ اِلَّا وَاَنْتُمْ
مُّسْلِمُوْنَ ﴿١٠٢﴾ وَاعْتَصِمُوْا بِحَبْلِ اللّٰهِ جَمِيْعًا وَّلَا تَفَرَّقُوْا ص
وَاذْكُرُوْا نِعْمَتَ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْكُمْ اِذْ كُنْتُمْ اَعْدَآءً فَاَلَّفَ بَيْنَ قُلُوْبِكُمْ
فَاَصْبَحْتُمْ بِنِعْمَتِهٖٓ اِخْوَانًا ج وَكُنْتُمْ عَلٰى شَفَا حُفْرَةٍ مِّنَ النَّارِ
فَاَنْقَذَكُمْ مِّنْهَا ط كَذٰلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللّٰهُ لَكُمْ اٰيٰتِهٖ لَعَلَّكُمْ
تَهْتَدُوْنَ ﴿١٠٣﴾

O those who believe, fear Allah, a fear which is His due, and let not yourself die save as Muslims. [102]

And hold on to the cord of Allah, all of you, and be not divided. And remember the blessing of Allah upon you: When you were enemies to each other, and He brought your hearts together, then you, with His grace, became brothers. And you were at the brink of a pit of Fire, then, He saved you from it. This is how Allah makes His signs clear to you, so that you may take the right path. [103]

Commentary

In the previous verses, Muslims were warned that the people of the Book, and others, want them to go astray from the right path so Muslims must remain vigilant of their moves and take steps to counter their anti-Muslim activities.

In the two verses appearing here, two important principles have

been given which go to make the collective strength of Muslims impregnable. These are:

1. *Taqwā*

2. Unity

The first principle appears in the first of the two verses. The second principle follows in the second verse. The first principle stated in the said verse is that one must 'fear Allah', that is, one should organize and manage his life with a full sense of responsibility before Allah, avoiding all that is forbidden or undesirable, doing so in a manner 'which is His due'.

What *Taqwā* is?

In Arabic, the word, '*Taqwā*' is used to denote avoidance and abstinence. It is translated as 'fear' in the sense that things one is asked to abstain from are nothing but things that cause fear, or alert one to the danger of Divine retribution.

Taqwā has its own degrees, the lowest is to avoid *Kufr* and *Shirk*, that is, disbelieving in Allah and His Message and attributing partners to His Divinity. In this sense, every Muslim can be counted as *Muttaqī* (one who has the quality of *Taqwā*), even if he is involved in sins. At several places in the Holy Qur'ān, the words, '*Muttaqīn*' (plural of *Muttaqī*) and '*Taqwā*' have been used in that sense as well. What is really desirable falls under the second degree of *Taqwā*, that is, to avoid that which is disliked by Allah and His Messenger. The merits and blessings of *Taqwā* enumerated in the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth have been promised on this degree of avoidance and abstinence.

As far as the third degree of *Taqwā* is concerned, this is a high station destined for prophets, عليهم السلام , their devoted deputies and men of Allah, for it is not within the grasp of everybody. To stand guard over one's heart against the onslaught of what does not relate to Allah, and to keep it filled with the remembrance of Allah and the desire to seek His pleasure, are great assignments.

The meaning of Taqwā 'as due'

While giving a directive to attain '*Taqwā*' the Holy Qur'ān has qualified the word of *Taqwā* with تُقٰتِهٖ (a fear which is His due) which means that one should seek to attain a degree of *Taqwā* which it inherently

deserves.

This has been explained by the blessed Companions, 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd, Rabī', Qatādah and Ḥasan al-Baṣrī رضی اللہ عنہم in the following words:

حَقَّ تُقٰتِہٖ ھو ان یُّطاع فلا یُعصی ویذکر فلاینسی ویُشکر فلایُکفر (البحر المحیط)

'A fear which is His due' means that one obeys, then does not disobey; remembers then does not forget; and is grateful, then does not become ungrateful.' (Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ)

The above explanation has also been reported with its chain of authorities ascending to the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم himself.

Major commentators have explained the sense of the above report differently. For instance, some say that the due fear of Allah means that, in obedience to Allah, one should dismiss all derogatory criticism, no matter where it comes from, always standing firm on what is just, even if, by being just, he has to hurt his own self, or his children, or his parents. Some say, that one can never hope to achieve '*Taqwā* as due' unless he protects his tongue.

There is another verse in the Holy Qur'ān where it is said:

اِتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُمْ

Fear Allah as much as you can. (64:16)

According to the blessed Companions, Ibn 'Abbās and Ṭāwūs, this is really nothing but an explanation of حَقَّ تُقٰتِہٖ (a fear which is His due). It means that should one be doing his best, using all his attention and energy to guard against evil, the obligation of *Taqwā* shall stand fulfilled. If one, who has already done everything he could, happens to fall a victim to something impermissible, that would not be considered being against '*Taqwā* as due'.

The statement which follows immediately: فَلَا تَمُوْتُنَّ اِلَّا وَاَنْتُمْ مُّسْلِمُوْنَ (and let not yourself die save as Muslims) tells us that *Taqwā* is, in reality, the whole of Islām since the total obedience to Allah and His Messenger, and the total avoidance of disobedience both to Allah and His Messenger is what *Taqwā* is all about; and this is what Islām is.

The command in the verse, 'and let not yourself die save as Muslims' raises a possible doubt as man does not control death, it may come anytime, anywhere. This doubt is removed when we consider the *ḥadīth*:

كَمَا تَحْيُوْنَ تَمُوْتُوْنَ وَكَمَا تَمُوْتُوْنَ تُحْشَرُوْنَ

'As you live, so shall you die; and as you die, so shall you be raised.'

Therefore, anyone who is determined to live his entire life by the tenets of Islām, and to the best of his determination and ability, acts accordingly, his death will definitely come, God willing, on a state of Islām. Now, about some *ḥadīth* narrations where it is said that there will be people who may have spent a life-time of good deeds, yet the entire roster of such deeds shall go waste because of something awful they did later. Such fate can befall those people only who did not act with sincerity and steadfastness from the very beginning. And Allah knows best.

UNITY: The second principle of collective Muslim strength:

In the second verse, 103: وَاعْتَصِمُوْا بِحَبْلِ اللّٰهِ جَمِيْعًا (And hold on to the cord of Allah, all of you), the golden principle of unity has been presented with great eloquence and wisdom, for the principle, being the only effective binding factor, has been identified before the command to unite was given, following which, came the prohibition of disunity and chaos.

Elaborating this a little, it can be said that unity is something good and desirable, a premise generally approved by all human beings, no matter what place, time, religion or life style they adhere to. A person who considers fights and disputes as something useful, and good in themselves, would be hard to find anywhere. This is why all groups and parties around the world invariably ask people to unite, but experience shows that all is not well in world affairs. No doubt, everybody agrees that unity is useful, and necessary, yet humanity is divided apart in sects, groups and parties. Then, there is a whole chain of sects within sects and parties within parties, reaching the limits of absurdity where even the unity of two people, in the real sense, has become a myth. A few people get together, agree on something under the

driving force of temporary objectives; then, no sooner do interests get served, or remain unrealized, unity evaporates in thin air, and instead, there remains the fall-out of mutual bickering and hostility.

With a little deliberation, it will become clear that every group, every sect, almost every person would like to unite people on some self-made programme, while the position is that other people have their own self-made programmes. So, rather than agree with them, they invite others to line up under their programme. Therefore, all calls for unity end up in break-ups and chaos among parties and persons. Thus, stuck in this quagmire of differences, humanity at large is the loser.

Therefore, the Holy Qur'ān has not stopped at giving sermons on unity and order, instead, it has also come forward with a just principle which would help achieve and sustain the desired state of affairs in the world, something in which no group should find a ground for differences. The truth of the matter is that imposing a system or programme conceived by one or some members of the human race on other human beings, and hoping that all of them will accept it unanimously, is simply against commonsense, and justice, and is nothing but cheeky self-deception. However, the system and the programme given by the Creator-Sustainer of all the worlds, the *Rabb al-'Ālamīn,* is something all human beings should naturally agree upon. No rational human being can deny it on principle. Now, the only possible inroad to difference here can show up in the actual identification of the system given by the Sovereign of Sovereigns, the *Rabb,* the Lord. Which is it? The Jews say it is the system of the Torah, the Christians say it is the system of the Evangile; both say it was sent by God and it is necessary to act upon it. The approach goes as far as even the polytheists, who have groups among them attributing their respective religious rites to none but god.

But, if man could rise a little above his group prejudice and the blind following of forefathers, using his own God-given reason, he would stand face to face with the reality without any frills; the reality that the Last of the Prophets, صلى الله عليه وسلم, has come with the last message of Allah Almighty in the form of the Holy Qur'ān and that, at this point of time, there is no other system or living pattern acceptable

in the sight of Allah Almighty. Leaving this wider focus aside, we can turn to the first and present addressees of the Qur'ān, the Muslims who believe that in the world as we have found it, the Holy Qur'ān is the only way of life revealed by Allah Almighty without any shadow of doubt in it, and since Allah Almighty has Himself taken the responsibility of protecting it, there is just no possibility of interpolation or change in it right through to the Day of Judgement. With this position in view, I leave the part of the subject dealing with non-Muslim groups for some other occasion and say to Muslims alone who, being believers in the Qur'ān, have no other alternative line of action except this. If different parties among Muslims were to unite on the system of the Holy Qur'ān, thousands of their differences based on group, race and country would be resolved instantly, which block the road to human progress. Whatever difference may remain among Muslims, would possibly be in the understanding and the interpretation of the Qur'ān. If such difference stays within limits, it is neither blameworthy nor harmful to collective human living. In fact, the existence of such difference of opinion among the learned is natural. Therefore, exercising restraint and observing limits should not be so difficult to manage. Contrary to this, if our parties, were to go on fighting in complete disregard to the Qur'ān then, they would not be left with any possibility of correction. It is this chronic dissension and disorder which the Holy Qur'ān has sternly forbidden, and it is because of this abandonment of a great Qur'ānic principle that our community at large is wasting its potential by succumbing to chaos and factionalism. The Holy Qur'ān, in the present verse, shows us the way as to how we can eliminate this tendency to become divided when it says:

وَاعْتَصِمُوْا بِحَبْلِ اللّٰهِ جَمِيْعًا

And hold on to the cord of Allah, all of you.

Here, حبل الله (the cord of Allah) means the Holy Qur'ān. The blessed Companion, 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd is the narrator of the *ḥadīth* in which the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been reported to have said:

كتاب الله هو حبل الله الممدود من السماء الى الارض

The Book of Allah is the cord of Allah, extended from the heavens to the earth.

In another narration of the *hadīth* by the noble Companion, Zayd ibn Arqam, the words are: حبل الله هو القرآن : The cord of Allah is the Qur'ān (Ibn Kathīr).

In Arabic usage, the word, '*habl*' also means 'covenant' and, in an absolute sense, it covers everything that can be used as a connecting link. The metaphor of 'cord' has been used for the Qur'ān or the Faith to suggest that this is the connecting link which, on one side, establishes the lines of communion between those who believe and their Lord, while, on the other side, it brings all those who believe close together, forming one group.

In short, this one statement of the Qur'ān is full of wise rules of conduct. To begin with, it can be said that man must firmly act in accordance with the way of life revealed by Allah Almighty, that is, the Holy Qur'ān. Then comes the unity of action, that is, all Muslims should join hands to act in accordance with it. The result will be that Muslims will become united and organized as if they were a group holding on to the same cord firmly, turning the whole group into a powerful single body. The Holy Qur'ān has explained this mystique of Muslim unity more clearly in another verse where it was said:

إِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ سَيَجْعَلُ لَهُمُ الرَّحْمٰنُ وُدًّا

Surely, those who believe and do good deeds, among them the All-Merciful Allah shall create (mutual) affection. (19:96)

Also present here is a subtle analogy focused on Muslims holding fast to the Book of Allah. Their effort resembles the effort of those who would grip a strong rope while climbing and thus remain protected against a fall. So, the hint is: If Muslims keep holding on to the Book of Allah with their total strength, all in unison, no satan will ever succeed in dividing them. As a result, like their individual life, the collective strength of the Muslim community as well shall become stable and impregnable. Keeping a firm grip on the Qur'ān is something which helps in uniting scattered forces through which a dead nation gets new life. God forbid, if Muslims break away from it, it is certain that their national and collective life will be ruined, and when this happens, their individual life is not likely to fare any better.

Islam is the only source of the Muslim Unity

Unity and agreement need a centre of attraction or a common idea. This idea of a centre has been different with different peoples of the world. Somewhere it was race and tribal affinity. For instance, among the tribal complex of Arabia, Quraysh was one nation and Banū Tamīm another. There were other places where colour was the criterion, with black people taken as one nation, and the white people as another. There were still other places where the geographical or lingual factor was the centre of unity making Indian one nation and the Arab, another. Then there were areas where people rallied around ancestral customs drawing a line between those who follow these customs and those who do not, for instance, the Ārya Samājists in India.

The Holy Qur'ān, bypassing all these, made the Book of Allah basis of unity, that is, the system revealed by Allah Almighty. In a single stroke, it declared that Muslims are a nation attached to '*Ḥablillāh*', the cord of Allah, and those who disbelieve are another nation, not attached to this strong 'cord' or 'rope'. The statement: خَلَقَكُمْ فَمِنْكُمْ كَافِرٌ وَّمِنْكُمْ مُّؤْمِنٌ (It is He who created you. So, some of you are infidels and some of you are believers) means just this. So, the unifying factors of geography, race, tribe or language do not deserve to be the centre of affinity for man generally has no control over them. One cannot have them by personal effort or choice. Black cannot become white, a Qurayshī cannot become a Tamīmī, an Indian cannot become an Arab. Such unities can exist in a very limited frame; they can never claim to have assembled the whole humanity under their umbrella hoping to have the entire world gathered on a united platform. This is why the Holy Qur'ān has made the Divinely revealed way of life as the centre of unity, something one can elect to have for himself. Everyone from the East or the West, black or white, speaking Arabic or English or any other langūage, coming from any family, any tribe, any human group, can freely make this centre of unity his own as the most rational and correct choice available. Then, humankind can come close together around this centre and become brothers and sisters to one another.

What is needed is a little impartial thinking, a slight rising above

custom, prejudice and habit, as a result of which, the seeker shall be striking the best bargain of his life. Hopefully, he will discover for himself the way of life revealed by Allah Almighty, understand it, and follow it holding fast on to this strong medium of communion with Allah. As a result of this, the whole humanity will become beneficially concentric, having the centre of God-given guidance in common. Consequently, every individual member of this great brotherhood will be able to tune his deeds, material and spiritual, to the jointly accepted way of life from Allah.

Here is the principle, wise and correct, of which Muslims can be proud, and confident when inviting others to join in. Unfortunately, conspiracies hatched by the Europeans, for centuries to crush the Muslim unity have succeeded in dividing the ranks of those who claim to be Muslims.

Now they have themselves accepted the differences of race, language and nationalities as the dividing forces, and the link of Muslim unity stands severed by the concept of Arabs and Non-Arabs, Indians and non-Indians etc. The Holy Qur'ān proclaims a universal reality, loudly and openly, time and again, that these distinctions are ill-founded and divisive and any unity based on them shall remain irrational and false. Acentericity is not the solution for Muslims who have no choice but to 'hold on to the cord of Allah', all of them, as a way of life. This has given them a place of honour earlier, and if there is yet another success destined for them, this is how it would come again.

Before we move on to the second part of the verse, let us remember the two distinct instructions given to Muslims in this verse, that is, they should first live by the system prescribed for them by Allah Almighty, then, they should hold fast to 'the cord of Allah' all together. This is how the Muslim *ummah* gained ascendance in the past and there is no reason why, it will not rise again.

This far the discussion revolved around the positive aspect of unity among Muslims. The text now takes up the negative aspect when it says: وَلَا تَفَرَّقُوا (And be not divided). This is another example of the peculiarly wise style of the Holy Qur'ān when it would highlight the positive aspect first, then identify the negative, and forbid the later. In

another verse, it was said:

وَأَنَّ هٰذَا صِرَاطِي مُسْتَقِيمًا فَاتَّبِعُوهُ وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا السُّبُلَ فَتَفَرَّقَ بِكُمْ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ

Surely, this is the straight path, so, follow it. And do not follow (other) ways which will cause you to become separated from His way. (6:153)

Since disunity is the first and the last reason behind the destruction of a nation, therefore, the Holy Qur'ān has repeatedly forbidden it in various ways. It has been said in another verse:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ فَرَّقُوا دِينَهُمْ وَكَانُوا شِيَعًا لَّسْتَ مِنْهُمْ فِي شَيْءٍ

Those who have made divisions in their religion and become sects, you have nothing to do with them. (6:159)

Also narrated in the Holy Qur'ān are events concerning communities led by their prophet's عليهم السلام, communities which fell into temporal and eternal disgrace because of their mutual disputes and disunity which turned them away from the honest pursuit of their central purpose of life.

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said that there are three things Allah Almighty has liked for you while there are three others He has disliked. The ones He has liked are as follows:

1. That your worship should be for Allah alone and that you should not attribute partners to His divinity.
2. That you should hold on to the Book of Allah firmly and avoid disunity.
3. That you should have goodwill for those in authority from among you.

The three things which cause Allah's displeasure are:

1. Unnecessary argumentation.
2. Needless asking.
3. Wastage of resources.

(Ibn Kathīr from Abī Hurairah)

Differences and their Limits

A question that remains unanswered is: Is every difference to be

despised or is there a sort of difference which can be called unblameworthy? The answer is: Every difference is not blameworthy or despicable. A blameworthy difference is one in which individuals and groups stay away from the Qur'ān and think in terms of their whims and wishes. But, should it be that everyone stays united in and around the Qur'ān and at the same time, continues to accept the explanation and detail coming from the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم , and then, on the basis of God-given natural ability and intellectual quality, expresses differences in opinion about subsidiaries of religion, in which case, this difference will be natural and Islām does not forbid it. The difference among the blessed Companions and their Successors, and among leading juristic authorities was of this nature. It was nothing but this difference that was called a 'mercy' for the community. However, if these very subsidiary debates were to be invested with the status of the mainstream of religion, and differences arising out of them were to become a cause of controversy, confrontation, insult and vilification, then, this too will be considered blameworthy.

The Blessing of Brotherhood

The text, after making the two aspects of unity clear, points out to the conditions prevailing among pre-Islām Arabs. Because of tribal rivalries, incessant warfare and long-drawn blood feuds, the entire nation was on the brink of total ruin. What saved them from the fire of hatred was nothing but this blessings of Islām. So, it was said:

وَاذْكُرُوْا نِعْمَةَ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْكُمْ اِذْ كُنْتُمْ اَعْدَآءً فَاَلَّفَ بَيْنَ قُلُوْبِكُمْ فَاَصْبَحْتُمْ
بِنِعْمَتِهٖٓ اِخْوَانًا ۚ وَكُنْتُمْ عَلٰى شَفَا حُفْرَةٍ مِّنَ النَّارِ فَاَنْقَذَكُمْ مِّنْهَا

And remember the blessing of Allah upon you: When you were enemies to each other, and He brought your hearts together, then you, with His grace, became brothers. And you were at the brink of a pit of the Fire, then, He saved you from it. (103)

In other words, by erasing out deep-seated enmities going back to centuries, Allah Almighty made them brothers to each other through the benediction of Islām and the noble Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم . This made their life worth living, materially and spiritually, establishing between them such exemplary friendship that even their enemies found it awesome. Where in the whole wide world would they have

found this brotherly unity, this enormous blessing of Allah, even if they were to spend the combined treasures of the world?

If we recollect what was said in the opening remarks under these verses, we can see very clearly that the present verse helps eliminate the mischief engineered by the wicked when they tried to disunite the tribes of Aws and Khazraj by reminding them of their past feuds. The lesson is: Once in Islām, division is unthinkable.

Unity among Muslims depends on obedience to Allah:

The above statement of the Holy Qur'ān unravels yet another mystery. We now know that, in reality, Allah Almighty is the Master of hearts. Activating mutual love and consideration in the hearts of a people is purely a Divine blessing. Obvious alongwith it is the fact that one can become deserving of the blessings of Allah only through obedience to Him. With disobedience and sin, one cannot hope to have this reward.

It also follows from here that for Muslims, if they desire to have a stable organization among them, and unity, the only alternative open is that they should make obedience to Allah their life style. This point has been hinted at towards the end of the verse where it was said:

كَذٰلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللّٰهُ لَكُمْ اٰيٰتِهٖ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُوْنَ

This is how Allah makes His signs clear to you, so that you may take the right path. (103)

Verses 104 - 105

وَلْتَكُنْ مِّنْكُمْ اُمَّةٌ يَّدْعُوْنَ اِلَى الْخَيْرِ وَ يَاْمُرُوْنَ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ
وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ ۭ وَاُولٰۗىِٕكَ ھُمُ الْمُفْلِحُوْنَ ﴿١٠٤﴾ وَلَا تَكُوْنُوْا
كَالَّذِيْنَ تَفَرَّقُوْا وَاخْتَلَفُوْا مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَا جَاۗءَھُمُ الْبَيِّنٰتُ ۭ وَاُولٰۗىِٕكَ
لَھُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيْمٌ ﴿١٠٥﴾

And there has to be a group of people from among you who call towards the good, and bid the Fair and forbid the Unfair. And it is these who are successful. [104] **And do not be like those who became divided and fell into disputes after the clear signs had come to them. And for them there is grave punishment.** [105]

Commentary

In the previous verses (102 - 103), Muslims were given two principles which guarantee their collective well-being. If everyone practiced *Taqwā,* and made Islām his linkage with Allah, the result will be that individual life will be corrected and the collective strength of Muslims will come in its wake.

In the present verses وَلْتَكُنْ مِّنْكُمْ (104 - 105), yet another dimension of the proposed system has been added. It has been said here that Muslims are not to rest at the correction of what they think and do individually; but they should, alongwith that, be affectionately concerned with the good of other brothers and sisters in faith. By doing so, the whole community shall have the benefit of keeping its stance correct at all times, and at the same time, this will guarantee closer mutual cooperation and unity.

Collective well-being of Muslims depends on two things:

These are:

1. Self-correction through *Taqwā* and a firm hold on the 'cord of Allah' through the Qur'ān and the Faith.

2. The correction of others through call (*da'wah*) and positive propagation.

The second article of guidance appears in the opening verse which says: 'and there has to be a group of people from among you ...' So, the gist of the previous and the present verses is that one must correct his or her deeds and morals in the light of what Allah Almighty has sent as the Law, and with it, one must be concerned that other Muslim brothers and sisters do the same. The subject appears in Sūrah al-'Aṣr:

إِلَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ وَتَوَاصَوْا بِالْحَقِّ وَتَوَاصَوْا بِالصَّبْرِ

Except those who believe and do good deeds and invite each other to truth and invite each other to patience. (103:2,3)

In order that Muslims have a firm bond of unity, they must relate to Allah, and in order that this bond stays firm through the ages, it is necessary that Muslims consider it their obligation to enjoin what is good in accordance with the dictates of the Qur'ān and the Sunnah on their brothers and sisters in faith, and to stop them from what is not

good. The purpose is that 'the cord of Allah' should not slip out of one's hands. This was succinctly illustrated by my well-known teacher, Shaykh al-Islām, Maulānā Shabbīr Aḥmad 'Uthmānī رحمة الله عليه who said:

> "There is no way this 'cord of Allah' can break. That one loses his hand-hold on it is, of course, possible."

It is to offset this danger that the Holy Qur'ān asks Muslims to go on educating other brothers and sisters in faith exhorting them to good deeds and holding them back from the bad ones. This will become a collective effort to stay with Allah and His commands and collective will be their gains in this mortal world and in the Hereafter. There are other proofs in the Holy Qur'ān which show that the responsibility of mutual self-correction has been placed on the shoulders of each Muslim.

Cited above, you have seen the statement made in Sūrah al-'Aṣr. Elsewhere, in this very Sūrah 'Al-'Imrān, it is said:

كُنْتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ تَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَتَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ

> You are the best Ummah raised for mankind. You bid the Fair and forbid the Unfair. (3:110)

As is clear, here too, the obligation - 'to bid the Fair and forbid the Unfair' - has been assigned to the whole community. That they discharge this responsibility is the reason that they are placed higher over other communities. Similarly, there are a large number of sayings of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in this connection. As narrated in Tirmidhī and Ibn Mājah, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said:

والذى نفسى بيده لتأمرن بالمعروف ولتنهون عن المنكر اوليوشكن الله ان يبعث عليكم عقابا من عنده ثم لتدعنه فلا يستجيب لكم

> By Him in whose hands is my life, you must bid the Fair and forbid the Unfair lest Allah inflicts upon you a severe punishment; you shall then pray to Him (for mercy) but your prayer shall not be answered.

In another *ḥadīth*, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said:

من رأى منكم منكرا فليغيره بيده، فان لم يستطع فبلسانه، وان لم يستطع

فبقلبه، وذلك اضعف الايمان

> Whoever from among you sees that an evil is being committed then, he should change it with his hands. And if he is unable to do that, then, with his spoken word. And if he is unable to do even that, then, with his heart (i.e., abhor it taking it to be evil) and this is the weakest degree of faith.

All these citations leave no doubt about the fact that the duty of bidding the Fair and forbidding the Unfair falls on every individual of the community. The liability will, however, be proportionate to everyone's ability, which is true in the case of all other Islāmic injunctions. You may have noticed in the *ḥadīth* just quoted above that the obligation varies with ability.

Now, each function requires a different ability. First of all, the ability to bid the Fair depends on a correct knowledge of the Fair and the Unfair as such. One who cannot distinguish between the two or does not have a full knowledge of his undertaking would not be the right person to go out to others to bid the Fair and forbid the Unfair. Obviously, this would create disorder instead of discipline. It is quite possible that such a person may, because of his lack of knowledge, forbid something Fair or bid something Unfair. So, one who does not know the Fair and the Unfair is obligated to find it out, get to learn the *Ma'rūf* and *Munkar* as determined by the *Sharī'ah* of Islām and then he can go ahead and make these known to others as part of his community service. Let this be clear that until such time that one has acquired the pre-requisites of this mission, it is not permissible for him to stand up for this service. These days there are places where many ignorant enthusiasts would stand and deliver a sermon without knowing the Qur'ān or the Ḥadīth, or worse still, sections of common people would use hearsay to pick up arguments with others as to how something should or should not be done. This method is not proper to correct the Muslim society. Indeed it will result in more disputes and bring destruction to it.

Similarly, it is also included in 'to bid the Fair' that there be no formidable danger or unbearable harm likely to affect the person involved. Therefore, it was said in the *ḥadīth* quoted above that one should stop sin with his hands, that is, by this strength. If he is unable

to do so, let him do it with his tongue. If he is unable to do so with his tongue, he should at the least consider it bad in his heart. It is obvious that 'not being able to stop it with his tongue' does not just mean that this person's tongue cannot move. It simply means that he strongly apprehends that, should he open his mouth and speak the truth, his life will be taken or he will be subjected to some other serious injury or loss. In such a case, this person will not be taken as 'able' and he will not be called a sinner for the abandonment of bidding the Fair and forbidding the Unfair. It would be an entirely different matter, if he elects to stake his life and property in the way of Allah, bear all losses and still goes ahead and bids the Fair and forbids the Unfair, which is something many blessed Companions and their Successors have been reported to have done. This is determination at its highest, and a feat of great merit which raised their status in this world and in the Hereafter. But, what they did was not obligatory on them.

The nature of this obligation requires that one bid the Fair and forbid the Unfair in what is necessary; this would be obligatory. If done in what is commendable; the act too would remain commendable. For instance, the five *ṣalāts* are obligatory, therefore, giving good counsel to the non-performer of *ṣalāh* will become necessary on everyone. The *nawāfil* (optional prayers) are classed as commendable or desirable, therefore, giving good counsel on these will be commendable. Here, etiquette would require that while advising someone to do a commendable act, soft language and attitude must be adopted in all cases. Similarly, while inviting to an obligatory act, one should start with softness. However, he may resort to firmness in attitude if one rejects the soft call outright. It is common sight these days that people tend to object in case of what is commendable or indifferent rather strongly, but remain silent when people abandon what is obligatory.

In addition to this, this obligation will become operative for everybody when one actually sees something forbidden being done before his eyes. For instance, there is a person who is seeing that a Muslim is drinking wine, or stealing or raping, he will then be obligated with the duty to stop it to the best of his ability. If all this is not happening before his eyes, he is not liable to discharge this duty. Rather, this is the duty of the Islāmic government to inquire into the crime, investi-

gate and punish the criminal.

The words of the Holy Prophet من رأى منكم منكرا , صلى الله عليه وسلم (Whoever from among you sees th t an evil is being committed) point out to this principle.

Then comes another level of this function - that there be a dedicated group among Muslims devoted exclusively to the mission of calling people to the Faith and giving them right guidance towards it. Its single mandate and activity should be that it keeps calling people to the Qur'ān and the Sunnah through word and deed. When it sees people less inclined towards what is good, or sees them indulging in evils, it should not fall short of pointing out what is good and preventing people from taking to the evil, of course, according to its ability. It should be realized that this great mission can be carried out fully and effectively only when the performers have a complete knowledge of questions involved, as well as, when they are conversant with methods that go to make the call effective in the light of Sunnah. It is for this reason that a particular group of Muslims has been charged with this responsibility as they are likely to take care of all ramifications of this effort.

So, in the present verse:

وَلْتَكُنْ مِّنْكُمْ اُمَّةٌ يَّدْعُوْنَ اِلَى الْخَيْرِ وَيَأْمُرُوْنَ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ

it has been said: And there has to be a group of people from among you who call towards the good and bid the Fair and forbid the Unfair.

The first part of the verse, وَلْتَكُنْ مِّنْكُمْ اُمَّةٌ translated as (And there has to be a group of people from among you) gives a hint that the presence of this group is necessary. In case, a government does not shoulder this responsibility, it will become obligatory on Muslims that they should establish and operate such a group, because the vital role of the *Ummah* depends on the existence of such a group. What are the major features of this group? The Qur'ānic answer is: يَدْعُوْنَ اِلَى الْخَيْرِ (who call towards the good). It means that this call of theirs shall be their primary objective. What does *'khayr'* or 'good' mean? The Holy Prophet ﷺ has himself explained it by saying: الخير هواتباع القرآن وسنتى that is, *'khayr'* means following the Qur'ān and my Sunnah. (Ibn Kathīr)

Seen in a restricted sense, 'to bid the Fair and to forbid the Unfair' could have been taken to mean that doing so shall be needed only on special occasions when the evil or 'the Unfair' (*munkarat*) are seen being committed. But, the expression يَدْعُوْنَ اِلَى الْخَيْرِ (who call towards the good) in the beginning makes it clear that the function of this group will be to call towards the good, even when evil practices are not seen, or time may not have come to perform something obligatory.

For example, it is known that in the period between sunrise and *Zawal* (noon) no *ṣalah* is prescribed by the Shari'ah. But this group shall continue even in this period, to exhort people to perform *ṣalah* when it is due. Or, take fasting which may not be due at a particular time, the month of Ramaḍan being far away, but that group will not shelve its duty and become complacent. Instead, it will keep reminding people about the month of Ramaḍan in advance, stressing on them that fasting will be obligatory at that time. In short, calling people to good will be the intrinsic duty of this group for all times to come.

Then, this 'call towards good' has two sub-levels:

1. Calling non-Muslims towards '*khayr*', that is, Islam. This involves all Muslims. It means that every Muslim, in general, and this group, in particular, is responsible for giving the call of Islam, both by words and acts, to all peoples of the world. Therefore in a verse which enjoins *jihad* on Muslims, the true Muslims have been defined and praised in the following words:

اَلَّذِيْنَ اِنْ مَّكَّنّٰهُمْ فِى الْاَرْضِ اَقَامُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَاٰتَوُا الزَّكٰوةَ وَاَمَرُوْا بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ وَنَهَوْا عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ

that is, 'true Muslims are those who when We endow them with authority in a land the first thing they do is to establish a system of obedience to Allah on His earth, of which *ṣalah* is an outward expression, and raise their financial system on principles governed by *zakah*, and they make the bidding of the Fair and the forbidding of the Unfair their very purpose of life.' (22:41)

Only if, the Muslim community of today were to take to extending their call towards good to other peoples as their objective, all ills that have crept into our social frame through the blind following of non-

Muslim nations shall cease to exist. When a community resolves to unite for this great objective and becomes sure that it has to forge ahead among the nations of the world and that the responsibility of teaching and training them falls on its shoulders, will find that all its disunities have disappeared and there remains nothing but that wonderful goal in sight. The secret of the successes achieved by the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his noble Companions, رضی اللہ عنہم اجمعین, lies hidden behind this effort. It appears in a *ḥadīth* that the Holy Prophet ﷺ recited this verse وَلْتَكُنْ مِّنْكُمْ (And there has to be a group of people from among you) and then said: This special group is the group of the noble Companions (Ibn Jarīr). This is because each individual from among these blessed souls considered himself personally charged with the responsibility of calling people to good.

2. The second sub-level of this noble function is to call Muslims themselves towards the good. This means that *tablīgh* or the act of conveying the message of Allah should be done by all Muslims generally, and by the special group particularly, among Muslims, fulfilling the duty of *da'wah* imposed by the Qur'ān.

Again this call takes two forms as given below:

a). The first form will be that of a general and open call to good through which all Muslims will be educated into necessary injunctions and morals which have to be followed in Islām.

b). The second call would be particular and selective through which the objective will be to produce experts in the Muslim community, experts in the sciences of the Qur'ān and the Sunnah. Another verse of the Holy Qur'ān leads in this direction:

فَلَوْلَا نَفَرَ مِنْ كُلِّ فِرْقَةٍ مِّنْهُمْ طَآئِفَةٌ لِّيَتَفَقَّهُوْا فِى الدِّيْنِ وَلِيُنْذِرُوْا قَوْمَهُمْ إِذَا رَجَعُوْآ إِلَيْهِمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَحْذَرُوْنَ

> So, why should it not be that a group from every section of them goes forth, so that they may acquire perfect understanding of the Faith, and so that they may warn their people when they return to them, that they may be cautious. (9:122)

Further on, this responsibility-bearing group has been identified as carrying the additional distinction of يَأْمُرُوْنَ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ , that is, 'they bid the Fair and forbid the Unfair'.

The word, '*ma'rūf*' literally means 'recognized' but as a Qur'ānic term it includes all good enjoined by Islām, and promoted by all prophets during their respective ages. Since what is good is known and recognized, it has been referred to as '*ma'rūf*'.

Similarly, the word, '*munkar'* literally means 'non-recognized" or 'alien", but as a Qur'ānic term it includes all evils and disorders about which it is well-known and recognized that the Holy Prophet ﷺ declared them to be impermissible.

Keeping this in view, another point is worth-consideration. The Holy Qur'ān could have used the word '*wājib*' (what is obligating) instead of '*ma'rūf*', and the word '*ma'āṣī*' (sins) instead of '*munkar*', but it did not do so. The selection of the words '*ma'rūf*' and '*munkar*' may be indicative of the principle that the subject of bidding the Fair and forbidding the Unfair must be an act which is recognized by the entire Muslim *Ummah* as 'fair' or 'unfair' without any difference of interpretation. As for the rules deduced through *ijtihād*, which have always been open for the different interpretations offered by the capable Muslim jurists, they should not be made an issue during the process of الامر بالمعروف والنهى عن المنكر: 'bidding the fair and forbidding the unfair'[1] It is a pity that such a wise Qur'ānic principle is being generally neglected in the Muslim community, and the Muslims are made to fight each other on the secondary issues which can admit different interpretations. People tend to consider such efforts as some feat of piety while the evils which are held by the entire *ummah* unanimously as sins and are being committed in the community receive much less attention and often go unchecked.

Towards the conclusion of the verse, the commendable end of the group described therein has been enshrined in the following words:

وَأُولَٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ

And it is these who are successful.

It simply means that, in reality, success is achieved by such people alone.

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1. It means that if a recognized school of Islamic jurisprudence, such as Hanafī school adopting a particular interpretation of Islamic law, has held an act as 'fair', the holders of an opposite view like Sh'āfi'ites should not blame or reproach the former for their action, and vice versa. (editor)

Primarily, this description applies to the great group of the Companions of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم . They were the ones who rose with the great objective of calling towards the good and of curbing what is bad and in a very brief period of time conquered the entire world of their time. There were power centres of Byzantine and Persia which could not stop them and they went ahead teaching lessons in morality and purity and ushering around the light of righteousness and Godliness wherever they went.

Having established that Muslims have a distinct mission to convey and preach the God-oriented message of good, the text moves on to warn Muslims with the words:

وَلَا تَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ تَفَرَّقُوا وَاخْتَلَفُوا مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَآءَهُمُ الْبَيِّنٰتُ

And do not be like those who became divided and fell into disputes after clear signs had come to them. (105)

It means that Muslims should not be like Jews and Christians who, even after clear injunctions of Allah Almighty had reached them, became divided in the implementation of the basic code of faith simply because they preferred to follow the dictates of their desires. Thus, thrown in violent mutual disputations, vocal and physical, they brought Divine punishment upon themselves. This verse is, in fact, a complement of وَاعْتَصِمُوا بِحَبْلِ اللّٰهِ جَمِيعًا (verse 103) where Muslims were asked to seek unity and strength by attaching themselves to Allah's commands, individually and collectively, which helps make an entire community act like one body, one person, one entity. Then comes the perpetual mission of *da'wah*, the act of calling people to good, the process of bidding the Fair and forbidding the Unfair. These nurture and strengthen that unity. After that, by saying وَلَا تَفَرَّقُوا (and be not divided) in verse 103 and وَلَا تَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ تَفَرَّقُوا (And do not be like those who became divided) in the present verse, Muslims have been asked to learn a lesson from past communities which were destroyed by mutual dissensions with the good counsel that they should do their best to stay safe against this disease.

The type of divisiveness censured in this verse is a division that shows up because of arrogant and egotistic self-assertiveness, be it in the fundamentals of religion or in its subsidiaries. The statement

after clear signs had come to them' is an obvious indicator towards this explanation. The truth is that all fundamentals of religion are clear. Even some subsidiaries are so clear that they allow no margin of disagreement, unless of course, there be a selfish motive behind it.

However, there are subsidiary issues not so definite and clear. They may have no clear support from the texts of the Holy Qur'ān and Sunnah, (rather they are deduced by the scholars on the basis of analogy) or the text on which they are based is open to different interpretations. The resulting difference of opinion in the understanding of these subsidiaries is not included in the sense of this verse. The well-known authentic *ḥadīth* narrated by al-Bukhārī and Muslim from the blessed Companion, 'Amr ibn al'Āṣ, is more than enough to permit it. In this *ḥadīth* the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم has said that one who does *Ijtihād* (conducting a competent inquiry within the framework provided by the Sharī'ah to resolve a religious issue) and comes up with a ruling which is correct, he gets a twofold reward; and if he makes a mistake in his *Ijtihād*, he gets one reward.

This tells us that an *Ijtihād* made by a competent scholar even if it turns out to be erroneous, is still worthy enough for a reward provided utmost effort has been made. How can this be regarded as blameworthy? So, the difference of opinion resulting from *Ijtihād* undertaken by the blessed Companions and the great Imāms has absolutely no connection with the present verse. According to Sayyidnā Qāsim ibn Muḥammad and 'Umar ibn 'Abdul-'Azīz رحمۃ اللہ علیہ, the difference of opinion among the noble Companions is a source of mercy and ease for people (as in Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī from al-Baihaqī and al-Mudkhal).

Ruling on difference of opinion

Let us have a clear understanding of a serious matter of principle which arises out of this discussion. When we talk about differences in *Ijtihād*, we mean an *Ijtihād* which is permissible under the *Sharī'ah* of Islām. (There is no such thing as an *Ijtihād* outside the ramifications of the *Sharī'ah*). In a *Sharī'ah*-based *Ijtihād*, one or the other *Imām* may elect a view to stand by according to his line of thought, but the fact shall remain that, in the sight of Allah, only one of these views is true while other views are not so true. But again, the decision as to which is true and which is not rests with Allah Almighty, who will

bestow, on the Day of Resurrection, a twofold reward on the *Imām* and '*Ālim* who arrives at the correct ruling through his *Ijtihād*. Also rewarded on this Day, will be the one whose *Ijtihād* was not correct. In short, nobody except Allah has the right to sit on judgement in the difference of interpretation and say that this is true and that is false. However, to the best of one's understanding and insight whichever side one thinks is closest to the Qur'ān and the Sunnah he may say that, as far as he thinks, his choice is correct, although the possibility of its being incorrect cannot be ruled out and that which is the opinion on the other side, different from his chosen option is regarded as incorrect, with the possibility of that it may be correct in the sight of Allah. This is something all leading Imāms of *Fiqh*, the masters of Muslim jurisprudence, agree upon.

So, the rule becomes clear that no side taken in a difference of interpretations is '*munkar*' or 'unfair' and open to objection. Thus it will not be subjected to reproach under the authority of يَأْمُرُوْنَ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ (Bid the Fair and forbid the Unfair). More so, when it is not unfair, raising an objection against what does not fall under the 'Unfair' would itself be regarded as unfair. This must be avoided. This is a rule most educated people do not fully comprehend these days or simply neglect it. They do not desist from abusing and verbally attacking others who think otherwise with all sorts of derogatory remarks and fretting. Inevitably, this leads to internecine confrontation and rampant disunity among Muslims, a phenomenon visible all over the Muslim world.

It has been already said that a difference of interpretation, if it corresponds to the principles of *Ijtihād*, does not go against the injunction وَلَا تَفَرَّقُوْا (and be not divided) and, therefore, it is not blameworthy. But, the way this difference is being handled these days, when quarrelsome debates around the tertiary subjects are being nursed as if they were the very basis of Muslim faith. Unfortunately this is what results in mutual confrontation and abuse. It can be said without any shade of doubt that this behaviour is certainly an open violation of the same Qur'ānic injunction وَلَا تَفَرَّقُوْا (and be not divided). It is, most certainly, objectionable and totally contrary to the way of our learned elders, the blessed Companions and their Successors. There is no

precedent for this type of behaviour among the early scholars (the Companions and their disciples) who were the best of our community. That anyone was ever blamed on the basis of difference of opinion in matters of interpretation in this manner is something unheard of. For instance, Imām Shāfi'ī and other Imāms, may Allah have mercy on them all, rule that in a *ṣalāh* offered in a congregation behind an imām, all those offering their prayer behind him must recite the Sūrah al-Fātiḥah as an obligation. Given this ruling anyone who does not fulfil this obligation will not have offered his *ṣalāh* at all. Parallel to this is the view of Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, may Allah have His mercy on him, according to whom it is not permissible for one who prays behind an imām to recite his own Sūrah al-Fātihah, therefore, the Ḥanafiyah do not recite it while offering prayers in a congregation behind an imām. But, nowhere during the entire history of Muslim community there is any report saying that the followers of the Shāfi'ī school considered Ḥanafiyah as the deserters of the obligation of *ṣalāh* or that their prayers are not complete. They have never been blamed or criticised in the manner one would criticise and attack the evil acts forbidden by the Sharī'ah.

Imām ibn 'Abd al-Barr has, mentioned the attitude of the early scholars and the revered elders in the following words:

عن يحى بن سعيد قال ما برح اهل الفتوى يفتون فيحل هذا ويحرم هذا فلا يرى المحرم ان المحل هلك لتحليله ولا يرى المحل ان المحرم هلك لتحريمه (جامع بيان العلم، ص ٨٠)

> Those who are entitled to give *fatwā*, have always been issuing *fatwās*. One of them would rule (concerning injunctions not covered under the texts) that something is lawful while the other will rule it to be unlawful. But, the latter takes the former doomed to perdition, nor does the former think that the later is doomed to perdition. (Jami' Bayān al-'Ilm, p. 80)

An important note of caution

All this discussion about *Ijtihād* relates to the one carried out under the standard rules governing it. The very first condition is that *Ijtihād* can be resorted to in questions and issues about which there is no categorical decision available in the Qur'ān and the Sunnah. Or, it

may be that such decision is not clear and susceptible to more than one interpretation. Or, it is possible that a combination of some verses of the Qur'ān and some narrations of the *ḥadīth* may be apparently contradictory. In situations such as this, only those who possess the necessary pre-requisites to carry out *Ijtihād* will be entitled to do so. *Ijtihād* is no easy matter. It requires the most perfect expertise (in the real and full sense of the term) of all disciplines related to the Qur'ān and the Ḥadīth, a comprehensive and perfect knowledge of the Arabic language, and a comprehensive knowledge of the sayings of the blessed Companions and their Successors. Therefore, anyone who dabbles in questions which have been settled by authoritative texts and comes up with opinions contrary to those of leading authorities, then this difference of opinion will not fall under the category of *Ijtihād* as envisaged by the Sharī'ah..

This will also be true about the person who does not fulfil the conditions of *Ijtihād*. What he says does not affect the question at all. This tendency has unfortunately become fairly visible in Muslim societies. Those who consider themselves educated (in modern sciences) have started to express their personal opinions relating to matters that have been settled in the Qur'ān and Sunnah. This is ignorance at its ugliest. These are issues where even Imāms and *mujtahids* would not dare speak. How can the exercise of so called *Ijtihād* be acceptable from a person who does not even possess the knowledge of Islāmic sciences let alone the highest level of learning required for *Ijtihād*.

Verses 106 - 109

يَوْمَ تَبْيَضُّ وُجُوهٌ وَّتَسْوَدُّ وُجُوهٌ ۚ فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ اسْوَدَّتْ
وُجُوهُهُمْ ۚ أَكَفَرْتُم بَعْدَ إِيمَانِكُمْ فَذُوقُوا الْعَذَابَ بِمَا كُنتُمْ
تَكْفُرُونَ ﴿١٠٦﴾ وَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ ابْيَضَّتْ وُجُوهُهُمْ فَفِي رَحْمَةِ اللَّهِ ۖ
هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ ﴿١٠٧﴾ تِلْكَ آيَاتُ اللَّهِ نَتْلُوهَا عَلَيْكَ بِالْحَقِّ ۗ
وَمَا اللَّهُ يُرِيدُ ظُلْمًا لِّلْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٠٨﴾ وَلِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ
وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ ۚ وَإِلَى اللَّهِ تُرْجَعُ الْأُمُورُ ﴿١٠٩﴾

On a day when faces shall turn bright and faces shall

turn dark, as for those whose faces turn dark, (they shall be questioned): "Did you disbelieve after you had accepted the Faith? Now taste the punishment because you have been disbelieving." [106]

And as for those whose faces turn bright, they rest in Allah's mercy. They are there for ever. [107]

These are the verses of Allah We recite to you with all veracity. And Allah wants no injustice for (anyone in) the worlds. [108]

And to Allah belongs what is in the heavens and what is in the earth. And to Allah all matters are returned. [109]

Commentary

The meaning of 'bright' and 'dark' faces:

This expression appears in the Holy Qur'ān at several places, for instance:

وَيَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ تَرَى الَّذِيْنَ كَذَبُوْا عَلَى اللّٰهِ وُجُوْهُهُمْ مُّسْوَدَّةٌ

On the day of Doom, you shall see those who lied against Allah (with) their faces blackened. (39:60)

وُجُوْهٌ يَّوْمَئِذٍ مُّسْفِرَةٌ ضَاحِكَةٌ مُّسْتَبْشِرَةٌ وَوُجُوْهٌ يَّوْمَئِذٍ عَلَيْهَا غَبَرَةٌ تَرْهَقُهَا قَتَرَةٌ

Some faces on that day shall shine, laughing, joyous. Some faces on that day shall be dusty, overspread with darkness. (80:38)

وُجُوْهٌ يَّوْمَئِذٍ نَّاضِرَةٌ اِلٰى رَبِّهَا نَاظِرَةٌ

Faces on that day shall be radiant, looking towards their Lord. (75:22)

In these verses, several words such as, *'bayāḍ', 'sawād', 'ghabarah', 'qatarah', and 'naḍirah',* have been used to carry the same sense. In the English translation, where applicable, they appear in italics. According to the majority of commentators, 'brightness' signifies the brightness of the light of Faith, that is, the faces of believers shall be resplendent with the light of Faith, fresh and smiling due to happiness (as a result of rewards bestowed upon them by Allah). 'Darkness' signifies the darkness of disbelief, that is, the faces of the

disbelievers will be covered with the gloomy anguish of disbelief and the added soot of sin and transgression would turn them still darker.

Who are these people?

Commentators have explained the identity of the people with 'bright and 'dark' faces variously. Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ says that the faces of the followers of Sunnah shall be 'bright' and those of the followers of *Bid'ah* (innovation in the revealed Faith, not intended by Allah and His Messenger, nor by his learned dark Companions). Ḥadrat 'Aṭā' رحمۃ اللہ علیہ says that the faces of the *Muhājirīn* and *Anṣār* shall be 'bright' and the faces of the Banī Qurayzah and Banī Naḍīr shall be 'dark' (Qurṭubī).

Imām Tirmidhī narrates a *ḥadīth* from Sayyidnā Abū Umāmah رضی اللہ عنہ which identifies these as relating to the Khawārij, the oldest sect of rebels), that is, the 'dark' faces shall belong to the Khawārij, and the 'bright' faces to those whom they shall kill. The *ḥadīth* is given below:

قال ابو امامة كلاب النار شرقتلى تحت اديم السماء، وخير قتلى من قتلوه ثم قرأ: "يَوْمَ تَبْيَضُّ وُجُوهٌ وَتَسْوَدُّ وُجُوهٌ"

When Sayyidnā Abū Umāmah was asked if he had heard the *ḥadīth* from the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم, he replied, while counting on his fingers, that he would not have narrated this *ḥadīth* had he not heard it from the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم seven times (Tirmidhī).

Sayyidnā 'Ikrimah رحمۃ اللہ علیہ says that 'dark' faces shall belong to those from among the people of the Book who did confirm the coming of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم before he was ordained. But when he had been given prophethood they did not accept and support him. On the contrary, they started falsifying him (Qurṭubī).

There are other explanations as well, other than those cited above, but they all lead to the same conclusion, and are not contradictory. Imām al-Qurṭubī has said in his *Tafsīr* that the expression يَوْمَ تَبْيَضُّ وُجُوهٌ وَتَسْوَدُّ وُجُوهٌ in the verse means that the faces of sincere Muslims shall be 'bright' but the faces of all those who may have altered their religion, or may have become apostates and disbelievers, or may be concealing their hypocrisy in their hearts, shall be 'dark'.

Some special notes:

In the verse Allah Almighty has mentioned the *bayāḍ* first, and the *sawād* or darkness after it. But, in the verse which follows: فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ اسْوَدَّتْ وُجُوهُهُمْ (As for those whose faces turn dark), *sawād* or darkness has been made to appear before *bayāḍ* or brightness, although the sequence of the original statement required that the mention of brightness appear first at this place as well. This reversal of the order seems to indicate that Allah Almighty has pointed out to His main purpose of creation. That purpose is to bless His creation with His mercy; punishment is not the objective. So, those with bright faces come first as they deserve the mercy and merit from their Lord. People with dark, anguished faces were mentioned later as the ones who deserve punishment. Towards the close of the verse, the statement فَفِي رَحْمَةِ اللَّهِ (They rest in Allah's mercy) is meant to stress upon the great mercy of the Creator. One cannot miss observing that those deserving of mercy were identified immediately at the beginning of the verse and again, at the end of the verse, and very affectionately indeed. The mention of those whose faces shall turn dark remains in between. All this points out to His limitless, endless mercy, clearly suggesting that human beings were certainly not created to serve as an exhibit or manifestation of Divine punishment; instead, they were created to flourish under the sunshine of Allah's mercy.

2. About the statement, 'they shall rest in Allah's mercy', the blessed Companion Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ says that '*raḥmah*' or 'mercy' in the verse means '*Jannah*' or 'paradise'. Here too, the wisdom behind giving the name 'mercy' to 'paradise' is, quite obviously, that man, no matter how worshipful and pious he may be, shall not enter Paradise unless it be through the sole mercy of Allah Almighty. The reason is that being devoted in acts of worship is no feat of human excellence as such. On the contrary, the very ability to do so is, in itself, a gift of Allah. So, '*ibādah*' or worship does not, in itself, create an inherent right to enter Paradise. It is Allah's mercy alone through which one can enjoy the bliss of Paradise. (al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr)

3. The sentence فَفِي رَحْمَةِ اللَّهِ (they rest in Allah's mercy) is immediately qualified by هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ (they are there for ever). This means that the mercy in which the believers shall rest will not be temporary; it

would be forever and eternal. This blessing will never be taken away or reduced in their case. In contrast to this are those whose faces shall turn dark; for them, it has not be expressly mentioned if they shall be in that state for ever.

Sinning man earns his own punishment:

The verse فَذُوقُوا الْعَذَابَ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْفُرُونَ (106) (now taste the punishment because you have been sinning) indicates that the punishment on that Day is not from Allah but that it is as consequence of what man has earned while living his mortal life, for the truth is that the blessings of paradise and the hardships of hell are simply a changed form of our very deeds. So, later on in verse 108, it was said: وَمَا اللَّهُ يُرِيدُ ظُلْمًا لِّلْعٰلَمِينَ (and Allah wants no injustice for {anyone in the worlds} which means that Allah has no intention of being unjust to His creation. Whatever reward or punishment there is, is nothing but justice and very much the perfect expression of the divine wisdom and mercy.

Verse 110

كُنْتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ تَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَتَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَتُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللّٰهِ ط وَلَوْ اٰمَنَ أَهْلُ الْكِتٰبِ لَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَّهُمْ ط مِنْهُمُ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَأَكْثَرُهُمُ الْفٰسِقُونَ ﴿١١٠﴾

You are the best *Ummah* raised for mankind. You bid the Fair and forbid the Unfair and believe in Allah. And if the people of the Book had believed, it would have been better for them. Of them, there are the believers, while most of them are the sinners. [110]

Sequence

In previous verses, Muslims were asked to take special care in order to remain steadfast in their faith, bid the Fair and forbid the Unfair. In the present verse, it has been further emphasised that these are the very reasons why Allah Almighty has conferred upon the *Ummah* of Muḥammad, may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, the status of '*Khayr al-Umam*', the best of communities, dignified and elevated, when it does what it has been charged to do.

Why the best of communities?

The Holy Qur'ān has, in different verses, given several reason for

declaring the *Ummah* of the Holy Prophet Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وسلم as the best *Ummah*, the most important of which has appeared in Sūrah al-Baqarah, that is:

وَكَذٰلِكَ جَعَلْنٰكُمْ اُمَّةً وَّسَطًا

> And in the same way We made you a moderate *Ummah* (community). (2:143)

A detailed explanation of this verse can be seen in Volume I of this commentary. This portion deals with the major reason why the *Ummah* of Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وسلم has been called the best of human communities. There it has been pointed out that moderation is its great characteristic and that it is visible in all department of its collective life.

In this particular verse, another reason has been given. The reason is that this community has been raised for the sole purpose of dispensing good to all beings created by Allah. It has been actually charged with the function of remaining concerned with their spiritual and moral reformation. Seen in the perspective of past communities, it was this community which contributed most in the mission of 'bidding the Fair and forbidding the Unfair', even though this was already enjoined upon past communities as mentioned in authentic *aḥādīth*. However, to begin with, several past communities did not have *Jihād* as a religious obligation, in which case, the mission of 'bidding the Fair' could only be carried out by heart and tongue only. Available with the followers of Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وسلم is a third option of 'bidding the Fair', that of the power of the hand, which also includes all sorts of *Jihād*. Then, the enforcement of Islāmic laws through the agency of the government is also a part of it. In the case of other communities, distinguishing features of religion were gradually obliterated by general inertia. The obligation of *amr bi l'ma'rūf*, the ordained mission of bidding the Fair, also stood totally forsaken. As far as this *Ummah* of his is concerned, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ made this prophecy:

> In this *Ummah*, there shall be right through the day of Doom, a group of people which will remain firm and stick to (the task of) bidding the Fair and forbidding the Unfair.

The second distinguishing feature of this community is that they 'believe in Allah': تُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللهِ . At this point one may ask why should this be a distinguishing feature of the Muslim community as belief in Allah has been the common factor between all past prophets and their communities. The answer is clear. No doubt, belief as such is common to all, but the degrees of perfection in belief differ. The degree of preference given to the community of Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وسلم has a class of its own as compared to past communities.

Towards the end of the verse, it has been said about the people of the Book that there are some Muslims among them. This refers to those who had confirmed the prophethood of our Holy Prophet ﷺ such as, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Salām and others.

Verse 111

لَنْ يَّضُرُّوْكُمْ اِلَّآ اَذًى ۭ وَاِنْ يُّقَاتِلُوْكُمْ يُوَلُّوْكُمُ الْاَدْبَارَ ۣ ثُمَّ لَا يُنْصَرُوْنَ ﴿١١١﴾

They shall never (be able to) cause you any harm except a little hurt. And if they fight you, they will turn their backs on you, then they shall not be helped. [111]

Commentary

In previous verses (98-101), it was shown how hostile to Muslims the people of the Book were and how they planned to bring religious harm to them. Mentioned in the present verse are their plans to harm Muslims materially. The last sentence carries the prophecy that they shall not succeed.

This prophecy of the Holy Qur'ān was proved true when, during the entire period of prophethood, the people of the Book were unable to overcome the noble Companions who are the primary addressees here. This applies particularly to the Jewish tribes who had tried to sow seeds of discord among the Companions. The outcome was that these people were disgraced; some paid *jizya*, some were killed while others were exiled.

The next verse (112) makes the description complete.

Verse 112

ضُرِبَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ الذِّلَّةُ أَيْنَ مَا ثُقِفُوٓا إِلَّا بِحَبْلٍ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَحَبْلٍ مِّنَ النَّاسِ وَبَآءُو بِغَضَبٍ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَضُرِبَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ الْمَسْكَنَةُ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ كَانُوا يَكْفُرُونَ بِـَٔايَٰتِ اللَّهِ وَيَقْتُلُونَ الْأَنۢبِيَآءَ بِغَيْرِ حَقٍّ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ بِمَا عَصَوا وَّكَانُوا يَعْتَدُونَ ﴿١١٢﴾

Disgrace has been stamped over them wherever they are found, unless (saved) through a source from Allah and through a source from men, and they have returned with wrath from Allah, and misery has been stamped over them. All this because they used to deny the signs of Allah and to slay the prophets unjustly. All this because they disobeyed and used to cross the limits. [112]

Commentary

The meaning of disgrace and wrath cast on the Jews:

A detailed discussion on this subject has already appeared under comments on verse 61 of Sūrah al-Baqarah where the text has not mentioned any exception. This can be seen in Volume I of this commentary. It also covers the exception given in the present verse - إِلَّا بِحَبْلٍ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَحَبْلٍ مِّنَ النَّاسِ.

Briefly, the verse means that the Jews shall remain stamped with disgrace and misery except under two situations:

1. Though a Covenant of Allah. For example, a minor child or woman shall not be killed. (This exception is meant by the words 'through a source from Allah').

2. Through a treaty obligation, that is, بِحَبْلٍ مِّنَ النَّاسِ (through a source from men). Such patronage may cause their disgrace and misery not to become manifest. The specific words used in the Holy Qur'ān i.e., a source from men, cover all men, believers and disbelievers. The possibility that they live with freedom after making a peace treaty with Muslims is included here. Also possible is the situation that they may come under the protection of other non-Muslim powers through a peace treaty (or informal collaboration strategy), a situation that prevails in the form of the present-day state of Israel. To discerning

people all over the world, it is no secret that the state of Israel is really a joint encampment of the West. Behind all the facade of power they appear to have is the power of others. If the U.S., U.K., Europe, and USSR too, were daring enough to withdraw their patronage of Israel, it would not survive for a day. Allah knows best.

Verses 113 - 117

لَيْسُوْا سَوَآءً ۗ مِنْ اَهْلِ الْكِتٰبِ اُمَّةٌ قَآئِمَةٌ يَّتْلُوْنَ اٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ
اٰنَآءَ الَّيْلِ وَهُمْ يَسْجُدُوْنَ ﴿١١٣﴾ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ وَ
يَاْمُرُوْنَ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَ يُسَارِعُوْنَ فِى
الْخَيْرٰتِ ۗ وَاُولٰٓئِكَ مِنَ الصّٰلِحِيْنَ ﴿١١٤﴾ وَمَا يَفْعَلُوْا مِنْ خَيْرٍ
فَلَنْ يُّكْفَرُوْهُ ۗ وَاللّٰهُ عَلِيْمٌ ۢبِالْمُتَّقِيْنَ ﴿١١٥﴾ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا لَنْ
تُغْنِىَ عَنْهُمْ اَمْوَالُهُمْ وَلَآ اَوْلَادُهُمْ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ شَيْئًا ۗ وَاُولٰٓئِكَ
اَصْحٰبُ النَّارِ ۚ هُمْ فِيْهَا خٰلِدُوْنَ ﴿١١٦﴾ مَثَلُ مَا يُنْفِقُوْنَ فِىْ
هٰذِهِ الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا كَمَثَلِ رِيْحٍ فِيْهَا صِرٌّ اَصَابَتْ حَرْثَ قَوْمٍ
ظَلَمُوْٓا اَنْفُسَهُمْ فَاَهْلَكَتْهُ ۗ وَمَا ظَلَمَهُمُ اللّٰهُ وَلٰكِنْ اَنْفُسَهُمْ
يَظْلِمُوْنَ ﴿١١٧﴾

Not all of them are alike: Among the people of the Book there are those who are steadfast; they recite the verses of Allah in the night hours and they prostrate; [113] **they believe in Allah and the Hereafter, and bid the Fair and forbid the Unfair, and race towards the good deeds. They are among the righteous.** [114] **And whatever good they do, they shall never be deprived of it. And Allah is All-Aware of the God-fearing.** [115]

Surely, those who disbelieve, neither their wealth nor their children shall help them against Allah; and they are the people of the Fire. They shall be there for ever. [116]

The example of what they spend in this worldly life is just like a wind which, having chill within, hit the tillage of those who wronged themselves, and

destroyed it. And Allah has not wronged them, instead, they wrong themselves. [117]

In verse 110, it was said that among the people of the Book there are those who believe, yet most of them are disbelievers. Details appear in the present verse which gives a complementary profile of those who believed from among the people of the Book, and by becoming Muslims, they adopted the distinguishing hallmarks of the Faith that go to make believers the best of communities.

Soon after praising those who had embraced Islām from among the people of the Book, the text censures those of them who did not embrace Islām and insisted on retaining their stance of disbelief, not realizing that their wealth and their children will be unable to save them from the punishment of Allah and Hell shall be their eternal abode.

Verse 117 declares through a similitude that disbelievers simply waste what they spend in this worldly life, for belief in Islām is a pre-condition in order that such spendings be acceptable with Allah, of whatever sort they may be. The similitude stresses the fact that disbelievers inflict this injustice upon themselves when their spendings go to waste in this world and remain rewardless in the Hereafter. If they were not to wrong themselves, if they were to embrace Islām, they would have been like other Muslims who, on suffering a worldly loss, are compensated by Allah through reward and forgiveness of sins, as reported in *aḥādīth.*

Verse 118 - 120

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تَتَّخِذُوْا بِطَانَةً مِّنْ دُوْنِكُمْ لَا يَاْلُوْنَكُمْ
خَبَالًا ؕ وَدُّوْا مَا عَنِتُّمْ ۚ قَدْ بَدَتِ الْبَغْضَآءُ مِنْ اَفْوَاهِهِمْ ۚ وَمَا
تُخْفِيْ صُدُوْرُهُمْ اَكْبَرُ ؕ قَدْ بَيَّنَّا لَكُمُ الْاٰيٰتِ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْقِلُوْنَ
﴿۱۱۸﴾ هٰٓاَنْتُمْ اُولَآءِ تُحِبُّوْنَهُمْ وَلَا يُحِبُّوْنَكُمْ وَتُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِالْكِتٰبِ
كُلِّهٖ ۚ وَاِذَا لَقُوْكُمْ قَالُوْٓا اٰمَنَّا ۚ وَاِذَا خَلَوْا عَضُّوْا عَلَيْكُمُ
الْاَنَامِلَ مِنَ الْغَيْظِ ؕ قُلْ مُوْتُوْا بِغَيْظِكُمْ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلِيْمٌ بِذَاتِ

الصُّدُورِ ﴿١١٩﴾ إِنْ تَمْسَسْكُمْ حَسَنَةٌ تَسُؤْهُمْ وَإِنْ تُصِبْكُمْ
سَيِّئَةٌ يَفْرَحُوا بِهَا ۖ وَإِنْ تَصْبِرُوا وَتَتَّقُوا لَا يَضُرُّكُمْ كَيْدُهُمْ
شَيْئًا ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِمَا يَعْمَلُونَ مُحِيطٌ ﴿١٢٠﴾

O those who believe, do not take anyone as insider but from your own selves. They would spare no effort to do you mischief. They want you to be in trouble. Malice has come out of their mouths while what is concealed in their hearts is far worse. We have made the signs clear to you, provided that you understand. [118]

Look, you are the ones who love them and they do not love you. And you believe in the Book, in all of it. And when they meet you, they say, "We believe", and when they are alone they bite their finger-tips out of rage against you. Say, "Die in your rage." Surely, Allah is All-Aware of what lies in the hearts. [119]

If something good happens to you, it annoys them and if something evil befalls you, they are delighted with it. And if you keep patience and fear Allah, their cunning shall not harm you at all. And Allah is All-Encompassing of what they do. [120]

Commentary

These verses were revealed in a particular background. There were Jewish settlements around Madīnah. They had old friendly ties with the tribes of Aws and Khazraj. Individuals from these tribes were also on friendly terms with other individuals from the Jewish settlements. In their tribal capacity too, Aws and Khazraj were to the Jews their neighbours and allies. When these two tribes embraced Islām, they continued to maintain their old ties with them. Individuals from these tribes saw no problems in meeting their old Jewish friends with the same love and sincerity. But, Jews were so hostile to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and the religion brought by him that they were unwilling to be sincere and loving to anyone who had said yes to the prophetic call and had embraced Islām. So, they outwardly went along with the same old relationships with the Anṣārs of Madīnah, but inwardly they had turned into their enemies. The apparent friendship they had allowed to remain became their cover which they utilized in their

sinster efforts to foment trouble among Muslims so that their unity could be disintegrated. They even went to the limit of banking on this feigned friendship with Muslims to find out their organizational secrets and pass them on to the enemies.

It is this hypocritical behaviour of theirs which Allah Almighty has asked Muslims to guard against. We have been given an important rule of conduct when it was said:

يَاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تَتَّخِذُوْا بِطَانَةً مِّنْ دُوْنِكُمْ

O those who believe, do not take anyone as insider but from your own selves.

The word, *biṭānah* used here means a friend, confidant, one with whom secrets are shared. The lining or inside part of a dress which stays close to the body is also known as *biṭānah*. Derived from *baṭn* (inside), it is used in everything opposed to *ẓahr* (outside). That which is outside is *ẓahr* and that which is inside is *baṭn*. In garments, the outer part is *ẓihārah* and the inner part touching the body such as a lining is called *biṭānah*. [There is an expression in English - 'hand in glove'- which comes close to this sense, even if partly. It means 'to be on very intimate terms'.] Similarly, the expression, *biṭānatu-th'thawb* (بطانة الثوب) lends the metaphor of friend, confidant, one who comes to know internal secrets and that is how the word, *biṭānah* is used to carry that sense. The well-known, and quite reliable lexicon of Arabic, *Lisān al-'Arab* explains *biṭānah* as follows:

بطانة الرجل صاحب سرّہ وداخلة امره الذی یشاوره فی احواله

It means that a person's *biṭānah* is one who knows his secrets, has access to his affairs in which he seeks his advice. Rāghib al-Isfahānī in his *Mufradāt* and al-Qurṭubī in his *Tafsīr* have given the same meaning. (The word, '*biṭānah*', translated here as 'insider' is an effort to cover some of these important shades of meaning.)

So, it has been enjoined upon Muslims through this verse that they should not take persons other than those from their own community as confidants and advisers, in a way that leads one into spilling the sensitive secrets of one's own government, community or state. No doubt, under the shade of its universal mercy, Islām has given unusual instructions to Muslims in order that they treat non-Muslims with

compassion, goodwill, beneficence, kindliness and tolerance, and not leaving it at that, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has put these in actual practice in all affairs concerning non-Muslims. But, at the same time, and in perfect wisdom, binding instructions were given so as to make sure that the organized body of Muslims and its particular hallmarks stay protected. A Muslim cannot be permitted to go beyond a certain limit when developing or promoting relations (unilateral, bilateral or multi-lateral) with those who disbelieve in or practice hostility against the Law of Islām. This is so because such an action throws the doors of harm and danger open both for the individuals and the community. This arrangement is clear, reasonable, appropriate, and very necessary to give secure frontiers to the individuals as well as to the Muslim state.

About non-Muslims resident in Islāmic states or those tied with Muslims through a treaty, the teachings of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his most emphatic instructions for their protection are all part of the Islāmic law. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said:

من آذى ذميا فانا خصمه و من كنت خصمه خصمته يوم القيمة

> Whoever harms a *Dhimmī* (protected non-Muslim), I shall be his opponent on the Day of Judgement and I always defeat the one whom I oppose. (Reported by Ibn Mas'ūd)

In another *ḥadīth,* he said :

منعنى ربى ان اظلم معاهدا ولا غيره

> My Lord has prohibited me to wrong the one protected by a treaty, or anyone other than him. (narrated by Sayyidnā 'Alī)

In yet another *ḥadīth*, he said:

الامن ظلم معاهدا اوانتقصه اوكلفه فوق طاقته اواخذ منه شيئا بغير طيب
نفس منه فانا حجيجه يوم القيمة

> Beware, whoever wrongs a non-Muslim protected by treaty, or usurps his right, or obligates him to do what is beyond his power, or takes from him something without his genuine consent, then, I shall be the advocate for him (the said non-Muslim) on the day of Judgement.

Side by side with these concessions and considerations for non-

Muslims, instructions were given to Muslims that they should protect their distinct group cohesion by not trusting enemies of Islām and Muslims with their secrets. Ibn Abī Ḥātim narrates that Sayyidnā 'Umar ibn Al-Khaṭṭāb رضى الله عنه was asked to appoint a young non-Muslim as the chief manager and scribe in his office since he was very good at that. Thereupon, he said:

قد اتخذت اذا بطانة من دون المؤمنين

> If I were to take him in, in that case, I will be taking an insider from among non-Muslims (which is against the Qur'anic authority).

Imām al-Qurṭubī, famous scholar and commentator of the fifth century says, with marked pensive longing, that contravention of this teaching of the Qur'ān has produced evil results for Muslims:

وقد انقلبت الاحوال فى هذه الازمان باتخاذ اهل الكتب كتبة وامناء
وتسودوا بذلك عند جهلة الاغنياء من الولاة والامرآء

> Things have so changed these days that Jews and Christians were trusted with secrets and considered trustworthy through which they were able to prevail over the ignorant rich, the rulers and the chiefs.

Even today, in a state established under a particular ideology, a person who does not subscribe to this ideology cannot be admitted into the inner echelons of power as a confidant. In Russia and China, a person who does not believe in communism is not given any responsible office or, farther still, trusted with state secrets. A close study of the decline of Muslim states would reveal several reasons behind it. One of the oft-repeated ones will be that Muslims had entrusted their sensitive affairs in the hands of non-Muslim confidants. This policy was an active factor in the decline of the Ottoman Caliphate as well.

The reason why this command has been given is explained soon after. Starting from لَا يَأْلُونَكُمْ خَبَالًا (they would spare no effort to do you mischief) and ending at ان كنتم تعقلون (provided that you understand), the text warns Muslims that they should not take anyone other than their own Muslim brothers as insiders on their affairs, for no other group, be they Jews, Christians, hypocrites or other disbelievers, could be their genuine well-wishers. Contrary to that, they are always on the

look out for opportunities to hoodwink and hurt them materially and spiritually. They are always plotting to harm them in this worldly life as well as to take them away from the enjoined pursuits of their Faith. All this is what the Muslims can see for themselves, but the venom that lies hidden in their hearts is far too fatal. However there are times when they are enraged with their deceptive cool front thrown off and the fangs of their deep hostility become clearly visible. Why would an intelligent person take such people as his confidant? Allah Almighty has pointed out who they are and what has to be done about them. Now it is upto him who understands what is involved here.

The sentence وَدُّوْا مَا عَنِتُّمْ (they want you to be in trouble) is a perfect mirror of the mentality of disbelievers. Here, the in-depth teaching is that no non-Muslim can ever be the real friend and well-wisher of Muslims.

After that, in verse 119: هٰٓاَنْتُمْ اُولَاۗءِ تُحِبُّوْنَهُمْ, Muslims have been told that 'it is certainly strange that you go about loving them as friends, yet they are no friends of yours. Indeed, they are your worst enemies. Still more unusual is the situation because you believe in all Scriptures without any reservations as to the people they address, the time when they were sent down and the prophet they were revealed to. Contrary to this, they do not accept your Book and your Prophet. Their belief in their own Books is not correct either. Given this state of affairs it would have been expected that they should have been affectionate towards you and you should have been the ones to give them a cold shoulder. But, what is happening here is just the reverse of what it should have been.'

The mentality of disbelievers has been further clarified by saying: اِنْ تَمْسَسْكُمْ حَسَنَةٌ in the first part of verse 120 which has been translated as, 'if something good happens to you, it annoys them and if something evil befalls you, they are delighted with it.'

How can Muslims remain protected against the aftermath of sinster moves of the hypocrites and the deadly hostility of opponents? For this, a simple and effective prescription was suggested in:

وَاِنْ تَصْبِرُوْا وَتَتَّقُوْا لَا يَضُرُّكُمْ كَيْدُھُمْ شَيْـــًٔا ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ بِمَا يَعْمَلُوْنَ مُحِيْطٌ

And if you keep patience and fear Allah, their cunning shall

not harm you at all. Surely, Allah is All-Encompassing of what they do.

Ṣabr and Taqwā: Panacea for Muslims

The Holy Qur'ān has prescribed *ṣabr* (patience, endurance) and *Taqwā* (fear of Allah) as an effective measure against all hardships. This elemental teaching has been conveyed to Muslims not only here but also at many other places in the Qur'ān. For instance, in the section that follows immediately, it has been said:

بَلٰٓى اِنْ تَصْبِرُوْا وَتَتَّقُوْا وَيَاْتُوْكُمْ مِّنْ فَوْرِهِمْ هٰذَا يُمْدِدْكُمْ رَبُّكُمْ بِخَمْسَةِ اٰلٰفٍ مِّنَ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ مُسَوِّمِيْنَ

Why not? If you stay patient and fear Allah and they come upon you in this heat of theirs, your Lord will reinforce you with five thousand of the angels having distinct marks. (3:125)

Here, the promise of divine help has been made conditional upon *Ṣabr* and *Taqwā*.

In Sūrah Yūsuf, it has been said:

اِنَّهٗ مَنْ يَّتَّقِ وَيَصْبِرْ

Whoever fears Allah and keeps patience ... (12:90)

Here too, prosperity and success have been tied with *Ṣabr* and *Taqwā*. Towards the end of this very Sūrah, *Ṣabr* is being proposed in the following words:

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا اصْبِرُوْا وَصَابِرُوْا وَرَابِطُوْا وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُوْنَ

O those who believe, be patient, be more patient than others, and guard your frontiers, and fear Allah so that you may be successful. (3:200)

Once again, prosperity and success have been made dependent on *Ṣabr* and *Taqwā*.

The two words, *Ṣabr* and *Taqwā*, though looking like a short title, are nevertheless very comprehensive. They contain within themiselves a successful rule for all aspects of individual and collective life as well as public, government and military affairs.

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said, as narrated by Sayyidnā

Abū Dharr رضی اللہ عنہ :

عن ابی ذر قال قال رسول االله صلی الله علیه وسلمً انی لاعلم ایة لواخذ
الناس بها لکفتهم "ومن یتق الله یجعل له مخرجا" الایة (رواه احمد)

I know a verse which, if people were to take to it, would suffice them. And that is: 'And whoever fears Allah, for him He shall make a way out (of the difficulties) - 65:2.'

Verses 121 - 123

وَاِذْ غَدَوْتَ مِنْ اَهْلِكَ تُبَوِّئُ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ مَقَاعِدَ لِلْقِتَالِ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ
سَمِيْعٌ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿۱۲۱﴾ اِذْ هَمَّتْ طَّآئِفَتٰنِ مِنْكُمْ اَنْ تَفْشَلَا ۙ وَاللّٰهُ
وَلِيُّهُمَا ؕ وَعَلَى اللّٰهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿۱۲۲﴾ وَلَقَدْ نَصَرَكُمُ
اللّٰهُ بِبَدْرٍ وَّاَنْتُمْ اَذِلَّةٌ ۚ فَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُوْنَ ﴿۱۲۳﴾

And when you left your house in the morning in order to place the believers in positions for fighting. And Allah is all-Hearing, all-Knowing. [121] **When two of your groups were about to lose heart, while Allah was their guardian. And it is in Allah alone that the believers must place their trust.** [122] **And Allah certainly supported you at Badr when you were weak. So, fear Allah that you may be grateful.** [123]

Sequence

In the previous verses, it was said that no power could harm Muslims if they observed patience and fear of Allah (*ṣabr* and *taqwā*). Now, the temporary set-back faced by Muslims during the battle of Uḥud was due to their failure to observe these rules of conduct fully. The present verses remind Muslims of what happened during the battle of Uḥud, and also, of their victory at the battle of Badr.

Commentary:

Before we proceed to explain these verses, it is appropriate that we have before us a sequence of events that came to pass at Uḥud.

The background of the Battle of Uḥud:

It was the month of Ramaḍān, Hijrah year 2, when the Quraysh

army and Muslim *mujahidin* fought a battle at Badr in which 70 well-known *kuffar* (disbelievers) of Makkah were killed and an equal number was taken prisoners. This defeat, disastrous and disgraceful as it was, and really the first instalment of Divine punishment, incensed the Quraysh; their search for revenge knew no bounds. The relatives of Quraysh chiefs who were killed at Badr, appealing to the traditional Arab pride, resolved that they would not rest until they have avenged their defeat at Badr at the hands of the Muslims. They proposed to Makkans that the sale proceeds from things brought in by their trade caravan from Syria should be spent on nothing but this war so that they can avenge the slaying of their comrades by Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم and his companions. To this, everybody agreed and it was in the Hijrah year 3 that the Quraysh, along with several other tribes as well, marched out to mount an attack on Madinah. The invading force included even women so that they could appeal to the sense of honour their men had and implore them not to retreat, if they ever did.

When this armed force of three thousand strong, all laced with weapons and other logistics, pitched up its tents near the mountain of Uhud, about three or four miles outside Madinah, the Holy Prophet ﷺ went into consultation with Muslims. In his blessed opinion, warding off the enemy by staying in Madinah was easy and more likely to succeed. This was the first time that the leader of the hypocrites, 'Abdullah ibn Ubayy, who outwardly went along with Muslims, was asked to give his opinion, which turned out to be the same as that of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم . But, some zealous Muslims, who were unable to take part in the Badr encounter and were intensely eager to lay down their lives in the cause of Islam, insisted that they should go out and fight the enemy in the open so that the enemy does not take them to be cowards. To this, the majority turned.

In the meantime, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم went to his house and when he came out, he had his armour on. At that point of time, some people thought that they had forced him, against his opinion, to lead the fight outside Madinah in the open. Realizing what they did

was wrong, they submitted to him that he could act according to his opinion and stay in Madīnah. The answer was: 'It does not behove a prophet, once he has put on his armour and taken up his arms, to put them off without fighting.' This one sentence is sufficient to clarify the difference between a prophet and a non-prophet. A prophet cannot show weakness in that capacity. Then, here lies a lesson for the community as well.

When the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم left Madīnah on his way to confront the enemy, he had about a thousand men with him, but the hypocrite 'Abdullāh ibn Ubayy broke off enroute with about three hundred men, saying: 'When my advice was rejected and action was taken on the advice of others, why should we fight and why should we endanger our lives?' Obviously, most of his comrades were hypocrites, yet there were some Muslims too who swallowed the bait and tugged along with them.

Finally, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم reached the battlefield with a total of seven hundred *mujāhidīn*. He personally took charge of the action area setting up all arrangements in a formal military manner. The formations of his men were so placed that the mount of Uḥud remained on their rear. Sayyidnā Muṣ'ab ibn 'Umayr was made the standard-bearer and Sayyidnā Zubayr ibn 'Awwām, the commander of the mounted troops. Sayyidnā Ḥamzah was given the command of the unarmoured. On the rear, there was some likelihood that the enemy may cut his way in from that side. So, he positioned a company of fifty archers (arrow-shooters) on a hillock in the rear and ordered them to stand on guard against any attack from that side. They were specifically instructed not to bother about the fighting down the hill, irrespective of whether they win or lose, and were told that they just do not have to move from their appointed place.

The command of the company of archers was given to Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Jubayr. As for the Quraysh, they had gone through the battle of Badr and they too went into battle formations in an orderly manner.

The Battle of Uhud [1]

When the battle started, Muslims had an upper hand right from the beginning, so much so that the enemy forces went into total disarray. Muslims thought they had won and turned toward the spoils. At this point, the archers who were appointed by the Holy Prophet ﷺ to guard the rear also noticed that the enemy was on the run and they too started coming down from the mountain leaving their assigned battle station. Their commander, Sayyidna 'Abdullah ibn Jubayr reminded them of the emphatic command of the Holy Prophet ﷺ not to move from their place of duty and tried his best to stop them. But, except a few, others took the plea that as the order was tied with time they should now go and be with the rest. Khalid ibn Walid, who had not yet embraced Islam, was commanding a company of Makkan disbelievers. Making timely use of this opportunity, he went round the hill, went up through a pass and made a surprise attack. Sayyidna 'Abdullah ibn Jubayr رضی اللہ عنہ and the small number of men left with him tried their best to stop them but they were unable to do so and the chargers were able to pounce on Muslim forces down the hill all of a sudden. This situation made the running enemy turn back and reinforce the attack. The fate of the battle was totally reversed. Muslims were so confused with this unexpected turn of the battle that a major portion of them scattered away from the battle field. However, some Companions were still holding on resolutely. In the meantime, a rumour went round that the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم has met his *shahadah* (martyrdom). This shattered the nerves of his Companions and most of them lost heart. At that time, the Holy Prophet ﷺ was in the midst of about ten or twelve very devoted Companions. He was

1. The strategy used in this battle shows that the Prophet of Islam was not only a perfect leader and teacher, but also a creative military strategist, something not known in the world of that time. Comparing the battle plans of the two camps, Tom Under, a twentieth century historian says in his book, The Life of Muhammad that his opponents had courage and bravery but it was he who broke new ground in the management of warfare. The Makkan disbelievers fought recklessly and haphazardly while he used great foresightedness, strict discipline and efficient organization as additional assets.

injured. Defeat was about to come when, in the right moment, the Companions scattered on the battlefield came to know that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was alive. They regrouped themselves around him and moved him away towards the hill safely.

This defeat which made Muslims terribly upset was temporary, and there were causes behind it. The Holy Qur'ān comments on each cause in extremely measured words and exhorts Muslims to be cautious in the future.

Lessons from the events of Uḥud :

The events of the battle of Uḥud have in them a treasure of good advice and wise guidance for all Muslims. It will be recalled that the Qurayshi disbelievers had brought women with them so that they could excite them to fight and, in case of a retreat, put them to shame and exhort them to go back into the battle. The Holy Prophet ﷺ saw that Hindah, the wife of Abū Sufyān, was leading a group of women who were chanting poetical compositions to arouse the fighting passions of their men. They were saying:

ان تقبلوا نعانق ونفرش النمارق

اوتدبروانفارق فراق وا مق

that is, 'if you fight right on and win, we shall embrace you and make a soft bed for you, but, if you turn back, we shall make you miss our love.'

In contrast, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم may Allah bless him, was saying this in his prayer:

اللهم بك اصول و بك اقاتل حسبى الله ونعم الوكيل

that is, 'O Allah, from Thee I draw my strength and for Thee and in Thy name, I attack and fight. Sufficient for me is Allah, the only one good to trust.'

This prayer, every word in it, is demonstrating how Muslims should strengthen their connection with Allah not only in peace, but also in war, a pattern of behaviour which is drawing a line of clear distinction between Muslims and other nations.

2. Victory in war comes from Allah and not from piles of hardware.

Let us look at this lesson through the tightly-held frame of this battle. Is'nt it that the noble Companions, may Allah be pleased with them all, left behind them indelible marks of gallantry, sacrifice and dedication, the class of which would be difficult to match in history? Sayyidna Abu Dujanah رضی اللہ عنہ had turned his body into a shield for his beloved Prophet taking all in-coming arrows on his back. Sayyidna Talhah رضی اللہ عنہ had his body all perforated with arrow-heads, but he still did not leave his blessed master unprotected. Sayyidna Anas ibn al-Nadir رضی اللہ عنہ , the uncle of Sayyidna Anas ibn Malik رضی اللہ عنہ was absent from the battle of Badr which he regretted very much and longed to make amends whenever he could get the first opportunity to take part in a Jihad in the company of the Holy Prophet ﷺ .

A little later, came the battle of Uhud and Sayyidna Anas ibn al-Nadir was in it. When Muslims had scattered away and the disbelievers of Quraysh were coming in overwhelming strength, he started to mount his charge, sword in hand, when he met Sayyidna Sa'd who was going with the group of those who had scattered away from the battlefield. He called out to him, "O Sa'd, where are you going? I smell the scent of Paradise in this valley of Uhud.' Saying this, he charged ahead and it was after a tough fight that he finally laid his life in the way of Allah. (Ibn Kathir)

Sayyidna Jabir رضی اللہ عنہ says, "when Muslims became scattered, there were only eleven Companions left with the Holy Prophet ﷺ , Sayyidna Talhah رضی اللہ عنہ being one of them. The forces of Quraysh were surging forward. The Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said, 'Who is going to take care of them?' Sayyidna Talhah رضی اللہ عنہ responded immediately, 'I shall do that, O Messenger of Allah.' Another Companion, an Ansari, said, 'I am at your service.' He asked the Ansari Companion to go, who fought, and fell a martyr. Then came another pressure wave. He asked the same question again. Sayyidna Talhah offered himself as before. He was all impatient to hear the command of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم so that he could go ahead. He, once again, sent some other Ansari Companion and Sayyidna Talhah's wish remained unfulfilled. Thus, it was seven times that the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم asked the question and every time Sayyidna Talhah was not permitted to go while other Companions were permitted to go and

meet their *shahādah* (martyrdom).

3. Muslims were few in number, yet they won at Badr. Comparatively, they were more in number at Uḥud, yet they lost. Here too, for Muslims there is a lesson to learn: Muslims should not rely on their numerical or material strength, military hardware or logistic support, but they should make sure that they take victory as something which comes by the grace of Allah Almighty and therefore, they must always watch out that their relationship with Allah remains strong.

What happened at the battle of Yarmūk is worth remembering. The officer-in-command at the war front wrote to Sayyidnā 'Umar, the Khalīfah at Madīnah, requesting reinforcements in view of a reduced number of fighters. The reply that he gave is reproduced below:

"قد جاءني كتابكم تستمدونني واني ادلكم على من هو اعز نصراً واحصن جندا الله عزوجل فاستنصروه فان محمدا صلى الله عليه وسلم قد نصر في يوم بدر في اقل من عدتكم فاذا جاءكم كتابي هذا فقاتلوهم ولا تراجعوني". (مسند احمد، ابن كثير)

"Your letter reached me. You have requested reinforcements and I direct you to One who is most-powerful support-wise and most-protecting army-wise, that is, Allah, the Mighty, the Exalted. So, seek help from Him - because Muḥammad, may Allah bless him, was helped on the day of Badr despite their being fewer in numbers. So, when this letter of mine reaches you - fight. And do not turn back to me." (Ibn Kathīr, with reference to the Musnad of Aḥmad)

The narrator says, when they received this letter, they mounted an attack in the name of Allah, all of a sudden, against the formidable forces of disbelievers who were defeated. Sayyidnā 'Umar knew that victory or defeat for Muslims does not depend upon numbers. Instead, it depends upon trust in Allah, and on His help. This fact has been clearly stated by the Holy Qur'ān with reference to the battle of Ḥunayn:

يَوْمَ حُنَيْنٍ إِذْ أَعْجَبَتْكُمْ كَثْرَتُكُمْ فَلَمْ تُغْنِ عَنْكُمْ شَيْئًا

"(Remember) the day of Ḥunayn when you became proud about your numbers, then, nothing worked to your advantage. (9:25)

Now, let us turn to the explanation of these verses:

1. Verse 121 begins with the words, وَاِذْ غَدَوْتَ مِنْ اَهْلِكَ (When you left your house in the morning in order to place the believers in positions for fighting).

This is an example of the miraculous style of the Holy Qur'ān, specially when it reports events. It does not describe any event in its total detail as a matter of general principle. Events, or their details are taken up only when they carry with them implied points of guidance. For instance, a particular secondary detail, such as the time of leaving the house, has been identified through the word, غَدَوْتَ (*'ghadawta'*); and *ḥadīth* narrations prove that this morning was that of the seventh of Shawwāl, Hijrah year 3.

Then comes the description of the point from where this expedition started. The word, مِنْ اَهْلِكَ indicates that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was with his family at that time and when the time came to leave, he left, leaving his family behind him, even though this attack was aimed at Madīnah. These secondary details have guidance built in them. When there is the command of Allah, it is expected that the love of family and home should not stop one from obeying it. It will be noticed that details of what happened between the period of leaving the house and reaching the war front remain undescribed. Instead, the first thing done on the war front has been described as تُبَوِّئُ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ مَقَاعِدَ لِلْقِتَالِ, the placing of believers in positions for fighting.

The verse ends with the words, وَاللّٰهُ سَمِيْعٌ عَلِيْمٌ (And Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing). By reminding Muslims of these attributes of Allah, it has been pointed out that everything said by the two parties at that time was all in the knowledge of Allah Almighty, and absolutely nothing of what happened to the two of them remains hidden from Him, and so shall it be with the end of the war; that too, is not hidden from Him.

Next comes verses 122 beginning with the words, اِذْ هَمَّتْ طَّآئِفَتٰنِ مِنْكُمْ اَنْ تَفْشَلَا (When two of your groups tended to lose heart while Allah was their guardian). These 'two groups' refer to the Banī Ḥārithah of the tribe of Aws and Banī Salāmah of the tribe of Khazraj. These 'two groups' lost the courage to fight when they saw the hypocrite,

'Abdullāh ibn Ubayy and his men breaking away. But, Allah, in his grace, helped them come out of this state of apprehensiveness. Here, the fact was that their weakness was caused by the thought, and certainly not because of any weakness in faith. Ibn Hishām, the famous historian of Muslim battles has made this very clear. Then, the very Qur'ānic statement, وَاللّٰهُ وَلِيُّهُمَا (while Allah was their guardian) is a testimony to their perfect faith. Therefore, some elders from these two tribes used to say: "No doubt, the verse contains a complaint against us, but at the same time it bears a good news for us in the words: وَاللّٰهُ وَلِيُّهُمَا (while Allah was their guardian).

3. Towards the end of the verse, it has been said: "And it is in Allah alone that the believers must place their trust." Here, it has been made clear that Muslims should not rely on their superiority in men and materials. Not that they have to ignore material needs of the combat; of course, they should have whatever they can get together subject to their means, but the crucial thing is that they must place their total trust in Allah, and Allah alone. The apprehension of weakness that overtook Banū Ḥārithah and Banū Salāmah was caused by this material lack of strength. Therefore, *tawakkul* or trust in Allah was suggested as the treatment of all sorts of apprehensions.

Tawakkul is one of the superior human qualities. It does not mean that one should cut off all his connections with the effort to collect material support. On the contrary, one should collect what is obviously needed to the best of his ability, use it, and then, let Allah take care of the outcome. It is also necessary that one should not become proud of what has been collected as material assets, instead, "We trust in Allah" should be the sole concern. The good example of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is before us. That he himself organized the fighting strength of Muslims during this *Jihād*, assembled weapons and other war materials to the best of his ability, prepared battle plans appropriate to the time and place. Once on the war front, he set up entrenchments with combat-ready Companions placed therein. These were all part of the material-functional management of the battle. By making use of these with his own blessed hands, our beloved master, the last and foremost of prophets, demonstrated that material facilities are also a blessing of Allah Almighty. Ignoring them

or turning away from them cannot be called what *tawakkul* is. Here, the attitude of a Muslim slightly differs from that of a non-Muslim. A Muslim would, given his ability and means, collect all sorts of necessary material support, yet when it comes to trust and *tawakkul* that he would place in none but Allah. The non-Muslim is bereft of this spiritual dimension for he relies on his brute material strength. The manifestation of this difference has been common sight throughout all Islāmic battles.

4. The focus now turns to a particular battle where Muslims had demonstrated perfect *tawakkul* and Allah Almighty had blessed them with support and success. The reference to the battle of Badr, in the following words, has appeared in this very context.

وَلَقَدْ نَصَرَكُمُ اللّٰهُ بِبَدْرٍ وَّاَنْتُمْ اَذِلَّةٌ

And Allah certainly supported you at Badr when you were weak. (123)

Badr : Location and Importance

Badr is located about eighty miles south-west of Madīnah and used to be a halting-place while travelling between Makkah and Madīnah, before the modern *Ṭarīq al-Hijrah* was commissioned into service which bypasses it.

At that time, Badr was known for its abundance of water, something very important in the desert zones of Arabia. The first armed encounter between believers and disbelievers came to pass at this spot on Friday, Ramaḍān al-Mubārak, Hijrah year 2 which fell on March 11, 624 A.D. On a superficial view, this battle appears to be a local tribal war, but the truth is that it has charted a revolutionary course in the history of the world, therefore, the Holy Qur'ān calls it *Yawm al-Furqān* (a day of distinction). According to Professor Philip Hitti, this was Islām's first clear victory.

The expression وَاَنْتُمْ اَذِلَّةٌ translated as 'when you were weak' means that 'you were, at that time, few in numbers and materials'. According to strong and authentic narrations, the number of Muslims was 313. This 'army' had two horses and seventy camels. On these, they took their turns while riding.

The verse ends with the statement: فَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُوْنَ (So, fear Allah, that you may be grateful). This may remind one of the many places in the Holy Qur'ān where *Taqwā* (fear of Allah) and *Ṣabr* (patience) have been prescribed as a security shield against the machinations of the hypocrites and the harmful effects of hostile enemies. Right here, in these two behaviour models, there lies the secret of an entire organized struggle, and clear victory, that comes in its wake. As mentioned elsewhere, *taqwā* and *ṣabr* have not been mentioned here, in conjunction. Instead, *taqwā* has been considered sufficient for, in reality, *taqwā* is such a comprehensive human attribute that *ṣabr* too gets to be included therein.

Verses 124 - 129

إِذْ تَقُوْلُ لِلْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ اَلَنْ يَّكْفِيَكُمْ اَنْ يُّمِدَّكُمْ رَبُّكُمْ بِثَلٰثَةِ اٰلٰفٍ
مِّنَ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ مُنْزَلِيْنَ ﴿١٢٤﴾ بَلٰٓى ۙ اِنْ تَصْبِرُوْا وَتَتَّقُوْا وَيَاْتُوْكُمْ
مِّنْ فَوْرِهِمْ هٰذَا يُمْدِدْكُمْ رَبُّكُمْ بِخَمْسَةِ اٰلٰفٍ مِّنَ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ
مُسَوِّمِيْنَ ﴿١٢٥﴾ وَمَا جَعَلَهُ اللّٰهُ اِلَّا بُشْرٰى لَكُمْ وَلِتَطْمَئِنَّ
قُلُوْبُكُمْ بِهٖ ۗ وَمَا النَّصْرُ اِلَّا مِنْ عِنْدِ اللّٰهِ الْعَزِيْزِ الْحَكِيْمِ
﴿١٢٦﴾ لِيَقْطَعَ طَرَفًا مِّنَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْٓا اَوْ يَكْبِتَهُمْ فَيَنْقَلِبُوْا
خَآئِبِيْنَ ﴿١٢٧﴾ لَيْسَ لَكَ مِنَ الْاَمْرِ شَيْءٌ اَوْ يَتُوْبَ عَلَيْهِمْ
اَوْ يُعَذِّبَهُمْ فَاِنَّهُمْ ظٰلِمُوْنَ ﴿١٢٨﴾ وَلِلّٰهِ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا
فِي الْاَرْضِ ۗ يَغْفِرُ لِمَنْ يَّشَآءُ وَيُعَذِّبُ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ ۗ وَاللّٰهُ غَفُوْرٌ
رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿١٢٩﴾

When you were saying to the believers, "Shall it not suffice you that your Lord should help you with three thousand of the angel sent down (for you)?" [124] **Why not? If you stay patient and fear Allah and they come upon you even in this heat of theirs, your Lord will reinforce you with five thousand of the angels having distinct marks.** [125] **And Allah did it only that it be a good news for you and that your hearts may be at rest with it. And help is from none but Allah, the All-**

Powerful, the All-Wise. [126] **That He may cut off a flank of disbelievers or throw them down in disgrace, and they go back frustrated.** [127] **You have no authority in the matter, unless Allah forgives them or punishes them, as they are unjust.** [128] **And to Allah belongs what is in the heavens and what is in the earth. He forgives whomsoever He wills and punishes whomsoever He wills. And Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful.** [129]

Commentary

In the previous verses, the battle of Badr was cited in relation to the battle of Uḥud. Briefly stated there was the unseen support from Allah Almighty given to Muslims. In the present verses, some details of that support have been mentioned. Also stated is the wisdom behind the sending of angels.

One may naturally ask a question here. When Allah Almighty has endowed His angels with such power that just one of them could overturn an entire habitation, very much like what happened with the land of the people of Lūṭ عليه السلام which was overturned single-handedly by the angel Jibra'īl, why was it necessary to send out an army of angels? In addition to that, given the introduction of angels onto the battlefield, the obvious result should have been the total annihilation of every single infidel.

The Holy Qur'ān has, itself, given the answer in the verse وَمَا جَعَلَهُ اللّٰهُ اِلَّا بُشْرٰى. It means that the purpose behind the sending of angels was not really to help score a victory on the battlefield. Instead, the purpose was to give the believers the good news of victory to comfort them and to strengthen their hearts. This is very clear from the words اِلَّا بُشْرٰى (only that it be a good news) and لِتَطْمَئِنَّ قُلُوْبُكُمْ (that your hearts may be at rest) in the text. Far more clear are the words of Sūrah al-Anfāl about this event: فَثَبِّتُوا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا (So, make those who believe firm - 8:12). Here, the address is to the angels and they have been asked to see that Muslims do not get anxious and that their hearts stay firm.

How can hearts be made to stay firm? There are many possible ways, one of them could be through their spiritual input, something not too dissimilar to the direct beaming of attention as practiced by mystic *shaykhs*.

The possibility of doing this in several less complex forms also exists. For instance, they may simply assure the believers that angels are standing ready to help them - by appearing before them, by their voice signs or by some other method - as was witnessed in the battle of Badr where all these methods were used. In fact, in one exegetic explanation of the verse فَاضْرِبُوا فَوْقَ الْأَعْنَاقِ (So, strike over the necks - 8:12), this address is to the angels. According to some *ḥadīth* narrations, when an angel decided to attack a disbeliever, the head of the disbeliever slid of his body all by itself.[1] It has also been reported that some noble Companions heard the voice of Jibrā'il saying, 'Charge, Haizūm!'[2] Some of them saw some angels (Muslim). All these sensory experiences are part of the same chain of Divine support. Evidences prove that the angels of Allah did a few things to impress upon Muslims that the angels too are participating in fighting as a sort of assurance that His support through the angels is there. As said earlier, their objective was far from winning a war for the believers. Their real mission was to comfort Muslims and to give their hearts strength. That the obligation of *Jihād* has been placed on men in this mortal world, and that is how they are enabled to deserve merits and ranks in the Hereafter, is a clear proof of this view. If Allah Almighty had willed that countries be conquered through armies of angels, the very name of disbelief and disbelievers would have been effaced from the face of the earth, not to say much about governments and empires. But, in this system of the material world, Allah Almighty has not just willed it so. Here, disbelief and faith, obedience and sin shall continue to exist side by side. The great divide shall come on the Day of Resurrection when the true and the false shall become all distinct.

The rationale of the promises:

Let us now turn to the promises of angelic help in the battle of Badr. The verse of Sūrah al-Anfāl carries the promise of one thousand angels. In the present verse of Sūrah 'Āl-'Imrān, the promise begins with three thousand, then goes up to five. What is the wisdom behind this?

The fact is that Muslims noticed the thousand-strong force of the

1. From Sahl ibn Ḥanīf vide Al-Ḥākim and Baihaqī.

2. The steed of Jibrā'il.

enemy in the battle of Badr, as stated in Sūrah al-Anfāl, and compared it with their total count of three hundred and thirteen, so they invoked the help of Allah Almighty against such heavy odds. Thereupon, came the promise of one thousand angels, implying thereby that the number of their enemy shall be matched by an identical number of angels. The words of the verse are:

إِذْ تَسْتَغِيثُونَ رَبَّكُمْ فَاسْتَجَابَ لَكُمْ أَنِّي مُمِدُّكُم بِأَلْفٍ مِّنَ الْمَلَائِكَةِ مُرْدِفِينَ

When you were calling your Lord for help, so He responded to you (saying): I am going to support you with one thousand of the angels, one following the other. (8:12)

Even after this verse, the same purpose behind the sending of angels was made clear by saying: "And Allah did it, only that it be a good news for you, and that your hearts may be at rest with it."

Then comes the present verse of Sūrah 'Āl-'Imrān. Here, the promise of three thousand angels was probably made due to the reports received by Muslims that Kūrz ibn Jābir Muḥāribi was marching towards the battlefield of Badr with his tribal forces in support of the disbelievers of Makkah (as in Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī). The actual position in the confrontation was that the enemy forces were already three times larger than those of Muslims, who were somewhat disturbed by this news. Thereupon, a promise of three thousand angels was made so that the ratio is reversed and the number of Muslims goes three times higher than that of the enemy.

After that, right there towards the end of this verse, this number was increased, subject to conditions, to five thousand. The conditions were:

A. That Muslims shall hold on firmly to the great qualities of *ṣabr* (patience) and *taqwā* (fear of Allah).

B. That they come under enemy attack all of a sudden.

Out of these two conditions, the second one did not just materialize, therefore, the promise of the number, five thousand, did not remain effective. Granted that the second condition of the promise did not come to pass, major commentators and historians differ as to the actual fulfillment of the promise - was it in the form of five thousand or three thousand only? All these positions have been mentioned in

Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī.

From the verse لَيْسَ لَكَ مِنَ الْأَمْرِ شَيْءٌ (You have no authority in the matter) (128), the text returns to the main event of Uḥud after a brief mention of the event of Badr in between. This verse was revealed in the background of the battle of Uḥud where the Holy Prophet ﷺ lost one of his teeth, the lower right premolar, to be exact. His face injured, he is reported to have uttered: 'How shall such people prosper, people who do this to their prophet, although that prophet is calling them towards God?'. Thereupon, this verse was revealed.

According to yet another story from the Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been reported to have invoked evil fate for some disbelievers, whereupon came the revelation of this verse in which the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been counselled to remain patient and forbearing. [1]

Verses 130 - 131

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا۟ لَا تَأْكُلُوا۟ ٱلرِّبَوٰٓا۟ أَضْعَٰفًا مُّضَٰعَفَةً ۖ وَٱتَّقُوا۟ ٱللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ ﴿١٣٠﴾ وَٱتَّقُوا۟ ٱلنَّارَ ٱلَّتِىٓ أُعِدَّتْ لِلْكَٰفِرِينَ ﴿١٣١﴾

O those who believe, do not eat *Ribā* (interest) doubled and multiplied. And fear Allah so that you may be successful. [130] **And fear the Fire that has been prepared for the disbelievers.** [131]

The meaning of doubled and multiplied

The detailed rules regarding *'ribā'* and the philosophy underlying its prohibition have been discussed thoroughly in Sūrah al-Baqarah verses 275-278 (Volume 1 of this commentary). However, it may be pointed out here that words أَضْعَافًا مُّضَاعَفَةً (doubled and multiplied) used in this verse do not mean that the prohibition of *'ribā'* is restricted only to a transaction where the interest is doubled or multiplied. In fact, these words are not used in a restrictive sense, because it is evident from Sūrah al-Baqarah that *'ribā'* or interest is prohibited in any case, even though its rate is not so high as to make it doubled or multiplied.

1. Bayān al-Qur'ān.

These words are used only to explain the factual position prevalent at that time, and to indicate its unjust and evil nature. Moreover, these words also suggest that even the interest charged is simple and not compound, yet once a person is engaged in the business of interest he does not stop at charging interest in one transaction only. Rather, he reinvests the income of interest in another loan transaction, and keeps investing the interest proceeds in similar transactions again and again, and thus the ultimate result is that the original interest charged through the first transaction is doubled and multiplied.

Verses 132 - 133

وَاَطِيْعُوا اللّٰهَ وَالرَّسُوْلَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُوْنَ ﴿١٣٢﴾ وَسَارِعُوْٓا اِلٰى مَغْفِرَةٍ مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ وَجَنَّةٍ عَرْضُهَا السَّمٰوٰتُ وَالْاَرْضُ ۙ اُعِدَّتْ لِلْمُتَّقِيْنَ ﴿١٣٣﴾

And obey Allah and the Messenger so that you may be blessed. [132] **And race one another towards Forgiveness from your Lord and towards a paradise the width of which spans the heavens and the earth. It has been prepared for the God-fearing.** [133]

Commentary

In the previous verse, Muslims were commanded to abstain from interest-based dealings, a sin which deprives them of the quality of *taqwā*, (the fear of Allah, the sense of responsibility before Him).

The present verses stress the positive aspects of *taqwā* and complement the earlier subject alongwith the promise of reward for those who observe it. Worth remembering throughout one's life is the second point which will serve him well if taken as the guiding light and the constant orientation. Allah Almighty has made it clear in these verses that the obedience to Allah and His Messenger does not become genuine and effective through lip-service alone. Instead, the obedient ones are known by what they are and what they do, by their traits of character and their deeds.

The obedience of Allah and His Messenger

The first verse, in a brief statement, presents a cardinal command of Faith in the following words: وَاَطِيْعُوا اللّٰهَ وَالرَّسُوْلَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُوْنَ (And obey Allah

and the Messenger so that you may be blessed). Here, in order that one becomes deserving of Divine mercy, the obedience to Allah Almighty has been declared necessary and binding, and along with it, the obedience of the Messenger صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم has been made equally necessary and binding. This is something not limited to this verse alone. It has been repeatedly stressed throughout the Holy Qur'ān. The pattern of combining the command to obey Allah Almighty, immediately followed by the command to obey the Messenger, appears in the Qur'ān again and again. These continued and constant statements of the Holy Qur'ān are there to remind human beings that these are the basic principles of Islām and '*Imān*. The first part of the Faith is to affirm and declare the existence of God, His Oneness, and that man is there to worship and obey Him. The second part is the confirmation of His Messenger, and of obedience to him.

Also worth noting are the statements of the Holy Qur'ān which prove that, whatever the noble Messenger صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم says is by Divine permission and not on his own. The Holy Qur'ān says:

وَمَا يَنْطِقُ عَنِ الْهَوٰى اِنْ هُوَ اِلَّا وَحْيٌ يُّوْحٰى

And he (the messenger) does not speak out of his own desire.
It is not but a revelation revealed (to him) (53:3)

From this, we arrive at the conclusion that the obedience to the Messenger is the very same as the obedience to Allah. It is nothing separate from it. In Sūrah Al-Nisā' (4:80), the Holy Qur'ān has made it more clear in the following words:

مَنْ يُّطِعِ الرَّسُوْلَ فَقَدْ اَطَاعَ اللّٰهَ

And whoever obeys the Messenger, he surely obeys Allah. (4:80)

With this in view, the question is: Why have the two 'obediences' been stated separately? What purpose does it serve? Specially so, when this appears as a consistent feature in the Holy Qur'ān where we see both 'obediences' being commanded side by side.

To unfold the secret, we can say that Allah Almighty sent a Book to guide man in this world, and a Messenger. The Messenger was charged with the following duties:

(1) That he convey to people the verses of the Holy Qur'an precisely and exactly in the form they were spoken when revealed.

(2) That he should cleanse people of outward and inward impurities.

(3) That he should teach the community, not only the contents of the Book, but also its purpose.

(4) That he should teach people wisdom along with the Book.

This subject appears at several places in the Holy Qur'an almost identically in the form of:

يَتْلُوْا عَلَيْهِمْ اٰيٰتِهٖ وَيُزَكِّيْهِمْ وَ يُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتٰبَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ

... who recites to them His verses and makes them pure and teaches them the Book and the wisdom ...

This tells us that the obligatory functions of the Messenger are not simply limited to conveying the Qur'an to the people. There is more to it in that the Messenger is also responsible for teaching the Book, and clarifying its message. Also obvious is the fact that the addressees of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم were the eloquent people of Arabia who had command over the finer points of the Arabic language. Teaching of the Holy Qur'an to them could never mean that they were to be taught the literal meaning of the Qur'anic words, for they themselves understood all that perfectly well. Instead, the purpose of this teaching and clarification was, and could be nothing else, that an injunction of the Qur'an stated briefly or in a summary form should be clarified and elaborated upon by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and communicated to people with the help of a revelation which did not form a part of the Qur'an (*wahy ghayr al-matluww*: the unrecited revelation). On the other hand, this was inspired into his blessed heart. The verse of the Holy Qur'an إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا وَحْيٌ يُوْحٰى (It is not but a revelation revealed) cited a little earlier, points in this direction.

Let us understand this through some instances. There are a good many occasions in the Holy Qur'an where the text does not go beyond saying: أَقِيْمُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَاٰتُوا الزَّكٰوةَ (Establish the *salah* and pay the *zakah*). Even if units of prayer come to be mentioned, such as *qiyam*, *ruku'* and *sajdah*, they remain totally undefined. The modality, outward and inward, is just not there. It was angel Jibra'il who came as

commanded by Allah and taught all the details through demonstration before the Holy Prophet ﷺ. This was how the Holy Prophet ﷺ conveyed the word and the deed to the people of his *Ummah*.

There are details about the payment of *zakāh*: What are thresholds? How much has to be paid on each threshold? What part of a person's possessions is *zakātable*? What part is non-*zakātable*? How much from threshold resources goes *zakāt*-free?: All such details were given by the Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم . He even had these committed to writing as executive orders and passed on to several Companions.

Take yet another example. They Holy Qur'ān says: لَا تَأْكُلُوْٓا اَمْوَالَكُمْ بَيْنَكُمْ بِالْبَاطِلِ (And do not eat up each other's property by false means - 2:188).

Now there are deals and transactions of all sorts, such as buying and selling, rentals, tenancy, wages and many more. What forms are unjust, inequitable or harmful to public interest, and therefore, *bāṭil* or false? All these details were given to the community by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم by the leave of Allah. Similarly, this is true about all legal rulings of Islāmic Law.

Since all such details were conveyed to the community by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in fulfillment of his prophetic mission and under the guidance of Divine revelation, and since these details do not appear in the Holy Qur'ān, there was the likelihood that the uninitiated may be deceived into believing that these detailed rulings were not given by Allah Almighty and, therefore, they do not have to be carried out necessarily as part of one's obedience to Allah. It is for this reason that Allah Almighty has made the obedience of the messenger binding alongwith the obedience to Him, at various places in the Qur'ān, repeatedly. As such, the obedience of the Messenger is really nothing but the obedience of Allah Almighty, but, given its external appearance and detailed description, it is somewhat different from that. In view of this, it has been emphasised time and again that orders given by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم should be obeyed as if they were the very orders of Allah the obedience of which was mandatory. These may be there in the Qur'ān, open and clear, or may just not be there. They were still equally binding on the community.

This was a matter of crucial importance, not limited to someone falling in doubt. In fact, there were chances that the enemies of Islām would find an excuse to inject chaos in a basic Islāmic principle, and thereby make an effort to lead Muslims away from the right path. Therefore, the Holy Qur'ān has dealt with this subject in a variety of ways, in addition to its literal stress on the obedience to the Messenger. It has informed the blessed community of Muḥammad ﷺ that his duties include not only the teaching of the Book but also the added teaching of wisdom, pointing out to the fact that there are elements other than the words of the Book, which are also included in his teachings. That part too, identified as wisdom, has to be followed by Muslims as a matter of obligation.

As said earlier, the Holy Qur'ān used a variety of ways to focus on the same subject. For instance, it was said: لِتُبَيِّنَ لِلنَّاسِ مَا نُزِّلَ إِلَيْهِمْ which means that the purpose behind sending the Messenger is that he should explain for people the meanings and objectives of the verses revealed to him. (16:44) Then, there is the oft-quoted verse:

مَآ اٰتٰـكُمُ الرَّسُوْلُ فَخُذُوْهُ وَمَا نَهٰـكُمْ عَنْهُ فَانْتَهُوْا

> Whatever the Messenger gives you, take it, and whatever he forbids you, refrain from it (59:7).

All these ramifications have been placed there lest there comes a person saying: 'We have been obligated to follow only that which appears in the Qur'ān; what we do not find in the Qur'ān, to that we are not obligated.' Perhaps, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had fore-seen the problems which were to arise later when some people, in order to get rid of the teachings and explanations of the Messenger of Allah, would say 'For us, the Book of Allah is sufficient.' The Holy Prophet ﷺ has described this possibility in a *ḥadīth*, very clearly. The *ḥadīth* has been reported by al-Tirmidhī, Abū Dawūd, Ibn Mājah, al-Baihaqī and Imām Aḥmad in the following words:

لا الفين احدكم متكئا على اريكته ياتيه الامر من امرى مما امرت به اونهيت عنه فيقول لا ادرى ماوجدنا فى كتاب الله اتبعناه

> ... Lest I find one of you, reclining on his coach making comments on an order from my orders in which I bid some-thing or forbid something, saying, 'This we do not know. We

only follow what we find in the Book of Allah'.

Conclusion:

In short, the repeated stress on the obedience of the Messenger alongwith the obedience of Allah Almighty, as well as, specific instructions to follow the dictates of the Messenger at various places are there to counter the dangerous ignorance of a person who may venture to separate the details of Qur'ānic injunctions described by the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم , and available in the treasure-house of his *aḥādīth*, making it look like something foreign to the obedience of Allah, and consequently may hasten to reject them. The reality is that they cannot be separated:

گفته او گفته الله بود
گرچه از حلقوم عبد الله بود

What he said was said by Allah
Voiced, though, it was by a slave of Allah

Race towards forgiveness, towards Paradise :

The first command was: 'Obey the Messenger'. (132) The second command is: 'Race one another towards Forgiveness from your Lord and towards Paradise.' (133) Here, Forgiveness stands for the means of obtaining forgiveness, that is, good deeds which bring forth forgiveness. There are several exegetic views reported from the blessed Companions and their immediate successors. Though expressed differently, they convey the same theme. Out of the noble Companions and their successors, may Allah be pleased with them all, Sayyidnā 'Alī explained it as 'the fulfillment of obligations', Ibn 'Abbās as 'Islām', Abū al-'Āliyah as 'Hijrah', Anas ibn Mālik as 'al-Takbīr al-Ūlā (the first call of *Allahū Akbar* in *ṣalāh*)', Sa'īd ibn Jubayr as 'perfection of obedience', Ḍaḥḥāk as 'Jihād' and 'Ikrimah as '*Taubah* (repentance)'. The outcome of all these sayings is that Forgiveness covers all good deeds which become the means of obtaining Divine forgiveness.

At this point two things need our attention. First comes the resolution of an apparent contradiction which may be felt when one notices that the present verse carries a command to race one another towards Forgiveness and Paradise, while through another verse: لَا تَتَمَنَّوْا مَا فَضَّلَ اللّٰهُ بِهٖ بَعْضَكُمْ عَلٰى بَعْضٍ (And do not covet something by which Allah has made

some of you excel some others - 4:32), the very seeking of other merits and ranks has been prohibited.

The answer is that *faḍā'il* (merits, ranks, virtues) are of two kinds. The first kind relates to that which cannot be achieved by man, being beyond one's power and control. We can call these 'non-electable.' For example, colour or beauty or birth in a morally high family cannot be chosen and acquired. The other kind is something man can achieve by effort. These can be called voluntary or 'electable'. So, the reason why the effort to acquire non-electable merits, even its very desire, has been prohibited for the simple reason that they have been given to His created beings by Allah Almighty Himself in His infinite wisdom. It is something beyond human effort. Why run after them? All such efforts will lead to nothing but envy and malice. Let him who has been given a particular colour of his skin keep desiring to have some other colour. What is he going to get out of his desire? Nothing. However, there is a vast range of meritworthy deeds. One could, and would, make his mark there. That is why we have been asked to accelerate our efforts in that direction. This is not something restricted to one verse. The exhortation appears in several verses. Somewhere it is said: فَاسْتَبِقُوا الْخَيْرَاتِ (Try to get ahead of one anther in good deeds - 2:148, 5:48). Elsewhere it is said: وَفِي ذَٰلِكَ فَلْيَتَنَافَسِ الْمُتَنَافِسُونَ (And in this, then, aspire the aspirers.) (83:26)

Let us consider the advice of the sage who said: 'If one has a natural or physical handicap which is beyond his power to correct, he should remain contended (with his handicap) and unaffected by the achievements of others. He should go on doing what he does. For, if he were to pine over his handicap and envy the achievements of others, he would be unable to perform to his capability, and ultimately, he would end up doing nothing or very little.'

The second point worth considering is that Allah Almighty has mentioned 'Forgiveness' first and the 'Paradise' after it. May be, this is to suggest that entry into Paradise is impossible without Divine Forgiveness. The reason is obvious. Man may spend a life-time doing good and abstaining from the evils. Still the aggregate of his good deeds cannot pay the price of Paradise. What will take him to Paradise is only Forgiveness of His Lord, and His grace. The Holy Prophet ﷺ

has said:

سَدِّدُوْا وَقَارِبُوْا وَاَبْشِرُوْا، فَاِنَّهٗ لَنْ يُّدْخِلَ اَحَدًا الْجَنَّةَ عَمَلُهٗ، قَالُوْا: وَلَا اَنْتَ يَا رَسُوْلَ اللّٰهِ؟ قَالَ: وَلَا اَنَا اِلَّا اَنْ يَّتَغَمَّدَنِىَ اللّٰهُ بِرَحْمَتِهٖ

> Strive to be straight and true, take the middle course and seek glad tidings (of Allah's grace), for one's deeds shall not take anyone into the Paradise'. People said: 'Not even yours, O Messenger of Allah?' He said: 'Not even mine, unless it is that Allah covers me up with His mercy.' (al-Targhīb wa al-Tarhīb, with reference to al-Bukhārī and Muslim).

In short, our deeds are not the price of Paradise. But, as is the customary practice of Allah, He does bestow His grace upon a servant who does what is good. In fact, one who is given the very ability to do good deeds is really given the signal that Allah is pleased with him. So, let none of us be tardy in the performance of what is good. Since Divine forgiveness is the primary factor in one's entry into the Paradise, the text takes this importance into consideration and does not present forgiveness in the absolute sense. It has, rather, elected to say: مَغْفِرَةٍ مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ (Forgiveness from your Lord.). By doing so, the text highlights Allah's attribute as the Lord, showing thereby His added grace and mercy for His servants.

The second object towards which man is being asked to hasten is Paradise. It has been said here that the Paradise is as wide as whole of the heavens and the earth. Since human mind cannot conceive any greater vastness than that of the heavens and the earth within the confines of his experience, the Paradise has been likened to them. This is a manner of saying that Paradise is very vast, so vast that it can accommodate the entire heavens and the earth in its vastness.

When the width of the Paradise is so great who can imagine its length which should be even greater?

All the above discussion is based on the assumption that the Arabic word عرض (*'arḍ*) means 'width'. However, there is another possible interpretation adopted by some commentators. According to them the word *'arḍ* is also used in the meaning of 'price'. If the word is taken here in this sense, the verse would mean that Paradise is not an ordinary commodity; the entire heavens and the earth are its price.

With such an object of unimaginable worth and magnitude, what else should one do but hasten towards it.

Al-Rāzī in his 'al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr explains this point as follows:

قال ابو مسلم: ان العرض هنا ما يعرض من الثمن فى مقابلة المبيع اى ثمنها لوبيعت كثمن السموت والارض و المراد بذلك عظم مقدارها وجلالة خطرها وانه لا يساويها شئ وان عظم .

> Abū Muslim says that *'al-'arḍ'* in this verse means that which is offered against the object of sale as its price. In other words, if a price were to be put on Paradise, the heavens and the earth together with whatever is in them will be its price. The purpose is to demonstrate the most exalted status of the Paradise which remains unmatched by anything in its greatness.

Another statement about the Paradise is given in the end by: أُعِدَّتْ لِلْمُتَّقِيْنَ (It has been prepared for the God-fearing.) This tells us that Paradise has already been created. Clear indicators in the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth seem to suggest the existence of Paradise on the seventh heaven which is its surface.

Verses 134 - 138

الَّذِيْنَ يُنْفِقُوْنَ فِى السَّرَّآءِ وَالضَّرَّآءِ وَالْكٰظِمِيْنَ الْغَيْظَ
وَالْعَافِيْنَ عَنِ النَّاسِ ط وَاللّٰهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ ﴿١٣٤﴾ وَالَّذِيْنَ
إِذَا فَعَلُوْا فَاحِشَةً اَوْ ظَلَمُوْٓا اَنْفُسَهُمْ ذَكَرُوا اللّٰهَ فَاسْتَغْفَرُوْا
لِذُنُوْبِهِمْ ص وَمَنْ يَّغْفِرُ الذُّنُوْبَ اِلَّا اللّٰهُ ص وَلَمْ يُصِرُّوْا عَلٰى
مَافَعَلُوْا وَ هُمْ يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿١٣٥﴾ اُولٰٓئِكَ جَزَآؤُهُمْ مَّغْفِرَةٌ مِّنْ
رَّبِّهِمْ وَجَنّٰتٌ تَجْرِىْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَا ط وَنِعْمَ
اَجْرُالْعٰمِلِيْنَ ﴿١٣٦﴾ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ سُنَنٌ لا فَسِيْرُوْا فِى
الْاَرْضِ فَانْظُرُوْا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُكَذِّبِيْنَ ﴿١٣٧﴾ هٰذَا بَيَانٌ
لِّلنَّاسِ وَهُدًى وَّمَوْعِظَةٌ لِّلْمُتَّقِيْنَ ﴿١٣٨﴾

...Those who spend in prosperity and adversity and those who control anger and forgive people. And Allah loves those who do good [134] **- and those who, when they happen to commit a shameful act or wrong themselves, remember Allah, then, seek forgiveness for their sins - and who is there to forgive sins except Allah? - and do not persist in what they have done, knowingly.** [135] **Their reward is forgiveness from their Lord and gardens beneath which rivers flow where they shall live forever. And excellent is the reward of those who work.** [136] **A number of behaviour patterns have passed before you. So, traverse the land, and see what was the fate of those who belied (the prophets).** [137] **This is a declaration for mankind, and a guidance, and a lesson for the God-fearing.** [138]

Commentary

God-fearing Muslims can be identified by the traits of their character and the marks of their manner. So many benefits lie hidden behind their example and practice. This is the subject of the present verses.

Allah Almighty has made God-fearing Muslims to live as models for others. For instance, the Holy Qur'ān has, at so many places, emphasised the need to seek guidance and benefit from the company of the men of Allah. The verse: صِرَاطَ الَّذِيْنَ اَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ (the path of those whom You have blessed - 1:6) from Sūrah al-Fātiḥah clearly indicates that the straight and correct path of Faith has to be learnt from these very favoured servants of Allah. Then, there is the exhortation: كُوْنُوْا مَعَ الصّٰدِقِيْنَ .. (be with the truthful - 9:119) which shows how useful the company of such people really is. But there are all sorts of people in the world, including the clever ones who would pose as good and try to impersonate the genuine ones. For this reason, it was necessary to draw a fine line of distinction between the true and the false and to show how the favoured men of Allah can be identified by their special traits of character. Once this is known, people would abstain from wrong leaders and guides and would use the God-given guidance to first become sure of the true ones and then follow them.

By having identified the traits and marks of God-fearing Muslims, and having stated that they are the ones deserving of ultimate success

and of elevated stations in Paradise, the righteous have been given a good news (of receiving the same reward, if they follow them) and the evil-doers are exhorted and persuaded to mend themselves and follow the God-fearing.

This is exactly what has been hinted at in هٰذَا بَيَانٌ لِّلنَّاسِ وَهُدًى وَّمَوْعِظَةٌ لِّلْمُتَّقِيْنَ (This is a declaration for mankind, and a guidance, and a lesson for the God-fearing - 3:138), appearing towards the end of these verses. While describing the traits and marks of the God-fearing, the qualities relating to human rights and social behaviour have been mentioned first, and the qualities relating to the rights of Allah after them. This is to indicate that the rights of Allah, despite their supreme status above all rights, are not meant to benefit Allah in any way. Allah does not need any of them, nor does he stand to suffer in any way whatsoever, if they are not fulfilled.

His Being is absolutely free of all these concerns. The one who worships Him is the one who gains. Moreover He is Very-Merciful, therefore, whenever a person falls short in the fulfillment of His rights, he may regret any time for what he did, turn to Him and repent genuinely and sincerely, whereby all his sins can be instantly forgiven from that eternal fountain of Mercy and Nobility. Contrary to this, there is the case of the rights of the servants of Allah - man has to fulfil these. In addition to that, if A has rights against B and B does not fulfil those rights, naturally A runs into loss. It is not that easy to forgive and forget loss suffered by one human being at the hands of the other. Therefore, *Ḥuqūqul-'Ibād* or the rights of the servants of Allah have particular importance of their own.

Moreover, the correct balance in our universal order and the reformed pattern of our human society hinges on the fulfillment of mutual rights. A slight short-fall in this direction can trigger disorders, fights and wars. Conversely, should high morals be inculcated and practiced, even enemies would turn into friends. Feuds raging through centuries can subside into peace and bliss. This is one more reason why traits and marks relating to human rights have been taken up first.

Verse 134 announces the first of these traits as follows:

The habit of spending in the way of Allah in prosperity and adversity:

The verse reads: اَلَّذِيْنَ يُنْفِقُوْنَ فِى السَّرَّآءِ وَالضَّرَّآءِ (Those who spend in the way of Allah in prosperity and adversity). It means that they are so used to spending for the good pleasure of Allah that they do spend whatever they can under all conditions, be it prosperity or adversity - more from more and less from less. Three points of guidance emerge from this statement:

1. That those poor should not consider themselves to be totally free from the obligation of spending in the way of Allah. By doing so, they may be depriving themselves of the open opportunity to spend in His way, for the status of spending one dollar out of a thousand dollars is the same with Allah Almighty as is the status of spending one penny out of a thousand pennies. For all practical purposes, the way the owner of a thousand dollars does not find it all that difficult to spend one dollar in the way of Allah, very similarly, the owner of a thousand pennies should not really be hurt by spending one penny.

2. On the other hand, the point made here is that those who keep on spending within the limitations of their capacity to spend, specially when their circumstances are straightened, would discover to their delight that, by doing so, the blessed style of giving and the wonderful habit of sharing with others less fortunate has come to stay and that it will not go extinct. May be, the very benedictory quality of such conduct draws mercy from Allah Almighty and He, in His infinite grace, bestows on such a person new openings and new increases in his means of sustenance.

3. Yet another beneficial aspect of this guidance is worthy of serious notice. Think of one who is in the habit of spending what he has on other human beings, making it possible for them to benefit through his efforts, helping the poor, the needy and the deprived. It is obvious that such a person would never even think of usurping the rights of others against their wishes.

So, the core of this quality of character is that true Muslims, the God-fearing and the favoured servants of Allah, are always on the look out for opportunities to pass on benefits to other human beings irrespective of their being rich or poor. There was an occasion when Sayy-

idah 'Ā'ishah, may Allah be pleased with her, gave away one, just one piece of grape in charity because she had absolutely nothing with her at that time. According to another early report, there was a time when she gave one onion in charity. The Holy Prophet ﷺ has said:

اتقوا النار ولو بشق تمرة وردوا السائل ولو بظلف شاة

> Guard yourself against the Fire even if it be by giving a piece of date in charity and do not turn back one who begs empty-handed even if it be by giving a cloven hoof from a goat.

In a ḥadīth reported by Imām al-Rāzī in his al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr it is said that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم , on a certain day, exhorted people to spend in charity. In response, those who had gold and silver with them lost no time in giving these out in charity. Somebody brought date-flakes because he had nothing else to give away. The date-flakes were accepted and given in charity. Then came another person who said: 'O Messenger of Allah, I have nothing to spend in charity, however, I am known as a man of honour among my people, so I give my sense of honour in charity, after which I shall never be angry with a person in future, no matter how much he insults me.'

The teachings of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and the way they were understood and practiced by the noble Companions, may Allah be pleased with them all, make it obvious that spending in the way of Allah is not limited to the well-to-do and the wealthy. This quality of character can also be possessed by the poor and the less fortunate. They too can have that great attribute by spending in the way of Allah a little of whatever they can in proportion to their respective capacities.

Not By Wealth Alone: Other Options of Spending in the Way of Allah:

It is important to note at this point that the Holy Qur'ān uses the word يُنفِقُونَ which means that they spend in the way of Allah under all conditions, of prosperity and of adversity. However, it does not determine the 'what' of spending. The generality of the statement here seems to suggest that it includes, not only money, but everything else that can be 'spent'. For example, one who 'spends' his time and labour in the way of Allah, he too shall be credited with the quality of *infāq fī*

sabīlillāh or spending in the way of Allah. The *ḥadīth* quoted above supports this view.

The Wisdom behind the mention of prosperity and adversity:

May be, these are the two conditions of life in which man habitually tends to forget Allah. He will do that when very rich and upto the neck in luxury. He could also do that, fairly often, when worrying about his adversity. So, the verse clearly settles that the favoured servants of Allah are unique in their character who never forget Allah, neither in luxury nor in distress.

How aptly the last Moghul Emperor of Dehli, Bahadur Shaḥ Ẓafar made this Qur'ānic idea the subject of his poetry when he said:

ظفر آدمی اس کو نہ جانیے گا خواہ کتنا ہی صاحب فہم و ذکا
جسے عیش میں یاد خدا نہ رہی جسے طیش میں خوف خدا نہ رہا

'O Ẓafar, not much of a man is he,
no matter how wise he be,
He who does not remember Allah when wealthy,
he who does not fear Allah when angry.

From Rage and Revenge to Forgiveness and Favour:

This leads us to the next hallmark of a true Muslim. It has been said that they, if hurt by someone, do not flare up in anger and do not lose their self-control. Going a step further, they do not submit to the dictates of their anger and do not go for a revenge. Not only that, they simply surrender their option of taking revenge and actually forgive the wrong-doer from the depths of their heart. Not stopping at this high enough moral achievement, they rise still higher by doing good to the person who had caused pain to them. This one quality of character seems to be a combination of almost three qualities - to subdue anger, to forgive the offender, and then, being good to him. All these three things have been so eloquently identified in the present verse (134):

وَالْكٰظِمِيْنَ الْغَيْظَ وَالْعَافِيْنَ عَنِ النَّاسِ وَاللّٰهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ

... and those who subdue anger and forgive people. And Allah loves those who do good...

While explaining this verse, Imām al-Baihaqī has narrated an amazing episode from the life of Ḥadrat 'Alī (Zainul'ābidīn) ibn Sayyidnā Ḥusain رضی اللہ تعالی عنہما . The report says that his maid was

helping him in his *wuḍū* (ablution) when, all of a sudden, the water-pitcher slipped out of her hands spilling water all over Hadrat 'Alī (Zainul'ābidīn) ibn Sayyidnā Ḥusain رضی اللہ تعالی عنہما. His clothes got wet. In was natural that he would be angry. The maid sensed the impending danger and lost no time in reciting the following verse of the Qur'ān: وَالْكٰظِمِيْنَ الْغَيْظَ وَالْعَافِيْنَ عَنِ النَّاسِ (...and those who suppress anger and forgive people). Hearing this, the venerated scion of the Prophet's household lost whatever rash of anger he may have felt. He became totally silent. The maid then recited the second sentence of the verse: وَاللّٰهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ (And Allah loves those who do good). Since this sentence implicitly instructs people to be good to others and thus be loved by Allah, so Ḥaḍrat 'Alī (Zainul'ābidīn) ibn Sayyidnā Ḥusain once he heard it, said: 'All right, go. I give you your freedom.' (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī with reference to Baihaqī)

Forgiving people their mistakes and short-comings is a quality that ranks very high in human morals. Besides, its merit in the life-to-come is much higher. In *ḥadīth*, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم has been reported to have said:

> "On the Day of Resurrection, a proclamation will go forth from Allah Almighty asking if anyone had any rights due to Him. If so, let him stand. Those who shall rise on that occasion will be the ones who would have forgiven the injustices done to them by people in their life on earth."

In yet another *ḥadīth*, it has been said:

> من سره ان يشرف له البنيان وترفع له الدرجت فليعف عن من ظلمه ويعط من حرمه ويصل من قطعه
>
> "Anyone who likes to have lofty palaces in Paradise and wishes to have his ranks elevated, should forgive the one who has done injustice to him and present gifts to the one who has never given him anything and join up with the one who has severed relations with him."

At another place in the Holy Qur'ān, the text is far more clear when it teaches the great moral of doing good to those who do evil and establishes how enemies turn into friends through this noble method. There it was said:

ادْفَعْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ فَإِذَا الَّذِي بَيْنَكَ وَبَيْنَهُ عَدَاوَةٌ كَأَنَّهُ وَلِيٌّ حَمِيمٌ

Repel evil with what is best, then the one, between whom and you there is enmity, shall become as if he was a fast friend. (41:34)

This was the supreme measure of the moral training given to His noble Messenger by Allah Almighty. The guideline given to him was:

صِلْ مَنْ قَطَعَكَ وَاعْفُ عَمَّنْ ظَلَمَكَ وَاَحْسِنْ إِلَى مَنْ أَسَاءَ إِلَيْكَ

Join with him who severs relations with you and forgive him who does injustice to you and do good to him who is bad to you.

The moral grandeur of the Holy Prophet, may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, is unique and eminent. We can only think of the blessing of his teachings which so successfully ingrained even in his servants morals and traits of character similar to his own. Being the distinctive feature of a true Islamic society, there are hundreds and thousands of models visible in the lives of the Companions, their successors and among the venerated elders of the Muslim community.

There is an apt incident in the life of the great Imām Abū Ḥanīfah. Someone accosted him in a busy market place and heaped all sorts of insults and invectives on him. The great Imām controlled his anger and said nothing to him. He went home, took out a considerable quantity of gold and silver coins, put them in a gift-wrapped tray and went out to the home of his confronter. He knocked at his door. When this person came out, he presented this tray full of coins before him saying: 'Today, you did something very good to me. You gave me (something) of your good deeds (that you had done). It is in gratitude of this great favour of yours that I am presenting this gift to you.' The Imām's unusual conduct naturally affected the man. He repented and got rid of his bad habit for ever. After asking for Imām's forgiveness, he entered into his circle as a disciple and finally became a great scholar.

Upto this point, the text describes qualities of character that relate to the fulfillment of human rights. Following this, come qualities that relate to the rights of Allah where it has been said that true Muslims do not disobey Allah. Should they ever fall in sin under the compulsions of human weakness, they immediately turn to Allah, repent,

seek His forgiveness and resolve to abstain from that sin in future.

This character of true Muslims appears in the text in the following words:

وَالَّذِينَ إِذَا فَعَلُوا فَاحِشَةً أَوْ ظَلَمُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ ذَكَرُوا اللَّهَ فَاسْتَغْفَرُوا لِذُنُوبِهِمْ
وَمَن يَغْفِرُ الذُّنُوبَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَلَمْ يُصِرُّوا عَلَىٰ مَا فَعَلُوا وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ

...and those who, when they happen to commit a shameful act or wrong themselves, remember Allah, then, seek forgiveness for their sins - and who is there to forgive sins except Allah? -- and they do not persist in what they have done, knowingly. (135)

The verse tells us that involvement in sin is caused by one's negligence in remembering Allah. So, the instruction is: If a sin has been committed, one should immediately turn to Allah, renew the zeal to obey Him and start remembering Him as He should be remembered.

Another point of guidance here tells us that forgiveness of sins depends on two things:

1. To regret past sins, seek pardon for these and to pray for forgiveness.

2. To resolve fully not to go near them in future.

May Allah Almighty bestow upon us the good fortune to become possessed with these supreme morals identified by the Holy Qur'ān. *Āmīn*.

Verses 139 - 143

وَلَا تَهِنُوا وَلَا تَحْزَنُوا وَأَنتُمُ الْأَعْلَوْنَ إِن كُنتُم مُّؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٣٩﴾
إِن يَمْسَسْكُمْ قَرْحٌ فَقَدْ مَسَّ الْقَوْمَ قَرْحٌ مِّثْلُهُ ۚ وَتِلْكَ الْأَيَّامُ
نُدَاوِلُهَا بَيْنَ النَّاسِ وَلِيَعْلَمَ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَيَتَّخِذَ مِنكُمْ
شُهَدَاءَ ۗ وَاللَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿١٤٠﴾ وَلِيُمَحِّصَ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ
آمَنُوا وَيَمْحَقَ الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿١٤١﴾ أَمْ حَسِبْتُمْ أَن تَدْخُلُوا الْجَنَّةَ
وَلَمَّا يَعْلَمِ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ جَاهَدُوا مِنكُمْ وَيَعْلَمَ الصَّابِرِينَ ﴿١٤٢﴾

وَلَقَدْ كُنْتُمْ تَمَنَّوْنَ الْمَوْتَ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ تَلْقَوْهُ ۖ فَقَدْ رَأَيْتُمُوهُ وَأَنْتُمْ تَنْظُرُونَ ﴿١٤٣﴾

And do not lose heart and do not grieve, and you are the upper-most if you are believers. [139] **If you receive a wound, they have received a similar wound. And such days We rotate among the people, so that Allah may know those who believe and let some of you be martyrs -- and Allah does not like the unjust** [140] **-- and so that Allah may purify those who believe and eradicate the disbelievers.** [141]

Do you think that you shall enter Paradise despite that Allah has not yet known those of you who carry out Jihād nor has He known those who are steadfast. [142] **And you had been longing for death before you faced it. Now, you have seen it with your open eyes.** [143]

Once again, Muslims are being consoled through these verses about what happened to them at the Battle of Uḥud. They are being told that, under the customary practice of Allah, the disbelievers are the ultimate losers; it does not matter if Muslims have not scored a victory at this time because of their strategic mistake, but should they stick to the demands of their Faith, that is, perseverance and fear of Allah, it will be the disbelievers who shall be the ultimate losers.

Commentary:

The Battle of Uḥud has been fully described earlier in this Sūrah through which we already know that the initial success of the Muslim army turned into a defeat in this *Jihad* because of some of their own shortcomings, although they had already scored an earlier victory (at Badr). Seventy noble Companions sacrificed their lives on this occasion. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was hurt. But, inspite of all this, Allah Almighty let the balance of the Battle tilt in favour of Muslims and the enemy retreated.

This temporary defeat and setback came because:

1. The Muslim archers could not abide by the standing orders given to them by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم due to a difference of opinion. Some favoured holding on to the position they already held;

others saw no need to stay there and opted for the collection of spoils with everybody else.

2. The news that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been martyred on the battlefield weakened their resolve to fight.

3. The difference came up in something very serious, that is, the explicit command of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم , the obedience to which was mandatory.

So, these three mistakes by Muslims resulted in a temporary setback. No doubt, this temporary setback was later on turned into final victory for them, yet Muslim *mujāhidīn* were virtually torn apart with wounds. Dead bodies of their most valiant fighters were strewn before their eyes. Even the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was wounded by the merciless enemy. Disappointed, dismayed, they were also terribly shocked over their own mistakes. In short, Muslims were on the horns of a dilemma. They were pining over the past and there was acute danger that they may become weak in the future and the duty of leading the people of the world entrusted to them may be hampered. In order to cover these two gaps, the Holy Qur'ān came up with the declaration:

وَلَا تَهِنُوْا وَلَا تَحْزَنُوْا وَاَنْتُمُ الْاَعْلَوْنَ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُّؤْمِنِيْنَ

And do not lose heart and do not grieve, and you are the upper-most if you are believers. (139)

So, the message given to Muslims in the opening verse under comment is: Do not let weakness or inertia come near you in the future and do not pine over what has gone by. Finally, it is you who shall prevail, if you hold on to the path of faith and belief, having total confidence in the promises made by Allah Almighty, never ever turning your backs on obedience to the Prophet and *Jihād* in the way of Allah.

In other words, the object was to impress upon Muslims that they should not waste their time and energy by feeling sorry for whatever mistakes they have made in the past. Instead, they should devote to ways and means which make things right for them in the future. For success after failure, strong faith and an unflinching obedience to the Messenger of Allah are certain guarantees of a bright future. If

Muslims persist with these qualities, they are bound to be victorious ultimately.

This call of the Qur'ān made broken hearts throb again. Sulking bodies were aglow with a fresh spirit. Just imagine how Allah Almighty groomed the men carrying His message and gave Muslims for all times to come a principle and a rule of procedure whereby it was made necessary that Muslims should never shed tears over dead issues. Instead, they should do all they can to get together the means to strength and power. Then, right along with it, it was made very clear that supremacy and glory can be achieved through one, and only one, basic source, which is, having faith and fulfilling its demands. The demands of Faith include among other things, preparations which must be made in view of an impending war. It means that it is necessary to consolidate military power, assemble and make ready all relevant hardware, and harness all other means to that end, of course, in proportion to ability and capacity. The events of the Battle of Uḥud, from the beginning to the end, are a testimony to all these considerations.

The second verse that follows gives consolation to Muslims from another angle. It has been said that if Muslims were wounded or hurt in that particular battle, so also were those fighting against them. If seventy Muslim men were martyred with many wounded, is it not that they had condemned an identical number of their enemies to Hell, and wounded many, a year ago? Then, in this very battle, many a men from the enemy ranks were killed and wounded initially. So, when the text says:

إِن يَمْسَسْكُمْ قَرْحٌ فَقَدْ مَسَّ الْقَوْمَ قَرْحٌ مِّثْلُهُ ۚ وَتِلْكَ الْأَيَّامُ نُدَاوِلُهَا بَيْنَ النَّاسِ

If you receive a wound, they have received a similar wound. And such days we rotate among the people ...

it guides us to another important principle and rule of procedure.

In this mortal world, the customary practice of Allah Almighty is to cause the days of hardship and ease, pain and comfort, suffering and peace occur among people by turns. If, for some reason, a falsely-motivated power succeeds in getting a short-lived upper hand, the group motivated by the truth should not lose heart and come to think

that, from this point onwards, they are always doomed to nothing but defeat. Instead of taking this negative attitude, they should rather go about finding out the causes of that defeat, and once they have discovered those, they should take corrective measures and eliminate all possibilities of repeating those mistakes. In the end, the group motivated by the truth shall emerge as the ultimate victor.

Verses 144 - 145

وَمَا مُحَمَّدٌ اِلَّا رَسُوْلٌ ۚ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ الرُّسُلُ ۭ اَفَا۟ىِٕنْ مَّاتَ
اَوْ قُتِلَ انْقَلَبْتُمْ عَلٰٓى اَعْقَابِكُمْ ۭ وَمَنْ يَّنْقَلِبْ عَلٰي عَقِبَيْهِ فَلَنْ
يَّضُرَّ اللّٰهَ شَيْـًٔا ۭ وَسَيَجْزِي اللّٰهُ الشّٰكِرِيْنَ ﴿١٤٤﴾ وَمَا كَانَ
لِنَفْسٍ اَنْ تَمُوْتَ اِلَّا بِاِذْنِ اللّٰهِ كِتٰبًا مُّؤَجَّلًا ۭ وَمَنْ يُّرِدْ ثَوَابَ
الدُّنْيَا نُؤْتِهٖ مِنْهَا ۚ وَمَنْ يُّرِدْ ثَوَابَ الْاٰخِرَةِ نُؤْتِهٖ مِنْهَا ۭ
وَسَنَجْزِي الشّٰكِرِيْنَ ﴿١٤٥﴾

And Muḥammad is but a messenger, there have been messengers before him. So, if he dies or is killed, would you turn back on your heels? And whoever turns back on his heels can never harm Allah at all. And Allah shall soon reward the grateful. [144] **And it is not the choice of a person to die without the will of Allah, death being a time-bound destiny. And whoever seeks the return in this world, We shall give him out of it, and whoever seeks the return in the Hereafter, We shall give him out of it. And We shall soon reward the grateful.** [145]

Commentary

Related to the battle of Uḥud, these verses recount events which have a particular significance of their own for several reasons. As such, the Holy Qur'ān devotes four to five sections of the Sūrah 'Āl-'Imrān to the sequence of victory and defeat at the battle of Uḥud and to the natural points of guidance underlying these.

In the first verse out of those appearing above, the warning which is rather frightening, given to the noble Companions on an act of indiscretion by some of them, actually settles a matter of principle. A little

deliberation shows that there was a secret behind the temporary debacle suffered by the Muslims, the wounding of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, the spreading of the news that he had passed away and that some Companions lost heart because of it: that secret was nothing but that Muslims should come to understand this basic principle and become practically firm when the challenge comes. This principle of Islam was bipolar. First of all it must be fully realized that Islam gives great importance to the unique respect and love given to the Holy Prophet ﷺ, so much so that it has been made an integral part of Faith and the slightest deviation or weakness in this delicate matter has been equated with straight *kufr,* disbelief or infidelity. Then, at the same time, it was equally important to ensure that Muslims should not fall a prey to the same disease that afflicted the Nazarenes and Christians. They exaggerated the respect and love due to Sayyidna 'Isa عليه الصلوة والسلام by taking it to the extremes, invested him with partnership in the divinity of Allah Almighty and started to worship him.

When, at the time of the temporary setback suffered by Muslims at the battle of Uḥud, someone started the rumour that the Holy Prophet ﷺ had passed away, the agony that seized the noble Companions - a very direct, very natural reaction indeed - is something everybody cannot experience or reckon even in its most modest measure. Only he who has the knowledge of and feeling for the supreme love and devotion the noble Companions had for the prophet could come close to guessing the kind of agony and distress faced by them at that time. It really takes the full knowledge and realization of the sacrifices made by these blessed souls who, out of their unflinching devotion and love for their most dear mentor and the messenger of Allah, staked everything they had - money, property, children and their very lives for his sake, considering their sacrifices as the most desirable achievement of this mortal life, and proving it by their deeds.

Just imagine what would have happened to these devotees of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم when this shocking news came to them, specially so when the battle was in full cry, defeat was looming large after the initial victory, Muslims were losing ground and in this heat of the moment, they come to know the passing away of someone who was the very pivot of their struggle and the symbol of all their hopes.

The natural outcome of this situation was that a large group of the noble Companions started retreating from the battlefield in a state of confusion. This retreat from the battlefield was no doubt a result of fleeting confusion and in the least, without any indication of turning away from Islam. The truth of the matter was that Allah Almighty intended to mould into a group the Companions of His Messenger who were pious and angelic and who could become role models for the whole world. It was for this reason that an ordinary mistake by them was considered to be very serious. Therefore they were addressed on their retreating away from the battlefield in a fashion similar to what it would have been, had they deserted the fold of Islam. With this expressing of wrath, warning was given that all obligations of Faith, Worship and *Jihād* are for Allah who is Living and Eternal. Even if the news that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had been martyred on the battlefield were to be true, that would have been something which was to come to pass when appointed. Losing heart and abandoning the dictates of Faith were responses that did not behove those in their position. Therefore, it was said:

وَمَا مُحَمَّدٌ إِلَّا رَسُولٌ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ الرُّسُلُ ۚ أَفَإِنْ مَاتَ أَوْ قُتِلَ انْقَلَبْتُمْ عَلَىٰ أَعْقَابِكُمْ ۚ وَمَنْ يَنْقَلِبْ عَلَىٰ عَقِبَيْهِ فَلَنْ يَضُرَّ اللَّهَ شَيْئًا ۗ وَسَيَجْزِي اللَّهُ الشَّاكِرِينَ

And Muḥammad is but a messenger, there have been messengers before him. So, if he dies or is killed, would you turn back on your heels? And whoever turns back on his heels can never harm Allah at all. And Allah shall soon reward the grateful.

Here, Muslims are being warned that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ is going to leave this mortal world on one or the other day but they have to hold on to the Faith firmly after him as well, in the same measure as they did during his blessed times. From here, we also come to know that the injury caused to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم during that temporary setback and the news of his passing away on the battlefield was concealed divine arrangement through which all that could happen to the noble Companions after him was revealed during his very life-time so that any slip in their conduct of affairs could be corrected in the very words of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم as a result of which it could be ensured that these ardent lovers and devo-

tees of the Messenger of Allah do not lose their coolness under exacting conditions, specially when this event of the passing away of the Messenger of Allah does actually take place. This is exactly what happened later on when the noble Companions, even the greatest among them, were overwhelmed with the severest emotional shock at the time of his passing away. At this juncture, it was Sayyidnā Abū Bakr, may Allah be pleased with him, who used the authority of Qur'ānic verses such as these to explain the situation to them as a result of which all of them were able to accept the truth and control their emotions.

The need to learn that crucial lesson has been taken up in the second verse as well. In order to teach steadfastness under calamities and hardships, it has been said that the death of every human being lies written with Allah Almighty. Fixed is its date, the day and the time. Death cannot come to take one away before that, nor could one continue to live after that. If so, getting scared about a certain death means nothing.

Now, towards the end, there comes an admonition about one of the apparent causes of this incident. As stated earlier, the Companions who were posted by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم as guards on the hill in the rear saw that fellow Muslims were busy collecting spoils following the initial victory. Some of them started thinking about the fact of victory following which there was no need for them to stay at their post. If so, they concluded, why should they too not go in there and take part in the collection of spoils? So, they moved away from where they were ordered to be. Thereupon, it was said:

وَمَنْ يُّرِدْ ثَوَابَ الدُّنْيَا نُؤْتِهٖ مِنْهَا وَمَنْ يُّرِدْ ثَوَابَ الْاٰخِرَةِ نُؤْتِهٖ مِنْهَا وَسَنَجْزِى الشّٰكِرِيْنَ

> And whoever seeks the return in this world, We shall give him out of it, and whoever seeks the return in the Hereafter, We shall give him out of it. And We shall soon reward the grateful. (145)

Here, it has been hinted that they made a mistake when they abandoned the duty assigned to them by the Holy Prophet ﷺ in order to collect spoils. At this point, let us keep in mind that, in its real

sense, the collection of spoils is not the same as the unabashed pursuit of the material which has been condemned in the Sharī'ah of Islam. On the contrary, collecting spoils, depositing it in safe custody and spending it where it must be spent is all a part of *Jihād*, and for that matter, an act of worship. So, the Companions who took part in this mission never did it for sheer material gain, for they would have been entitled to receive their due share in the spoils of war even if they had not actively participated in the collection of spoils as guaranteed under the Islamic Law. Therefore, it cannot be said that these blessed Companions abandoned their post of duty under the temptation of worldly gains. But, as explained earlier under comments on the first verse (144), even minor mistakes made by major people draw more attention. Even an ordinary deviation from their duty is taken to be serious and they are admonished for that. This applies here as well. Granted that their collecting of spoils could be related with the desire to make worldly gains, at the most in some minor way; and equally granted is the possibility that this small connection had not influenced their hearts; yet, it was to take the morals of the noble Companions to the highest possible level that this act of theirs was identified as 'the seeking of return in this world' so that even the tiniest speck of worldly temptation fails to find its way into their hearts.

Verses 146 - 148

وَكَأَيِّنْ مِّنْ نَّبِيٍّ قُتِلَ مَعَهُ رِبِّيُّونَ كَثِيرٌ فَمَا وَهَنُوا لِمَا
أَصَابَهُمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَمَا ضَعُفُوا وَمَا اسْتَكَانُوا وَاللَّهُ
يُحِبُّ الصَّابِرِينَ ﴿١٤٦﴾ وَمَا كَانَ قَوْلَهُمْ إِلَّا أَنْ قَالُوا رَبَّنَا
اغْفِرْ لَنَا ذُنُوبَنَا وَإِسْرَافَنَا فِي أَمْرِنَا وَثَبِّتْ أَقْدَامَنَا وَانْصُرْنَا
عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿١٤٧﴾ فَآتَاهُمُ اللَّهُ ثَوَابَ الدُّنْيَا وَحُسْنَ
ثَوَابِ الْآخِرَةِ وَاللَّهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿١٤٨﴾

And there has been a number of prophets along with whom have fought many men of Allah, and they did not lose heart for what they suffered in the way of Allah,

nor did they become weak, nor did they yield. And Allah loves the steadfast. [146] **And they had nothing else to say except that they said: 'Our Lord, forgive us our sins and our excesses in our conduct, make firm our feet and help us against the disbelieving people.'** [147] **So, Allah gave them the return in this world and also the better rewards in the Hereafter. And Allah loves those who do good.** [148]

Connected with previous verses where Muslims were admonished for some of their shortcomings during the battle of Uhud, the present verses cite examples set by men of Allah from earlier communities showing how steadfast they were on the battlefield, something which should be emulated by the present addressees.

The explanation of some words:

1. *Ribbiyun* (ربيون): a derivation from *Rabb* (رب) like *Rabbani* (رباني) meaning 'of the *Rabb* or Lord' which has been rendered as men of Allah in the present translation. According to Ruh al-Ma'ani, here the use of the vowel sound 'i' in place of 'a' is irregular. Some commentators take '*Ribbiyun*': ربيون to mean 'many groups'. In their view, this is derived from the word, '*Ribbah*' (ربة) which means 'the group'. Now, as to who is meant here by '*Ribbiyun*': ربيون (men of Allah), it has been reported from Sayyidna 'Abdullah ibn 'Abbas and Hasan al-Basri that this refers to '*ulama*' (religious scholars) and '*fuqaha*' (juriconsults). (Ruh al-Ma'ani).

2. '*Istakanu*' (استكانوا) has been derived from '*istakanah*' (استكانة) and means 'to be subdued and rendered weak and immobile' (Baydawi).

3. '*Wahanu*' (وهنوا) has been derived from '*wahn*' (وهن) and means 'to lose heart under suffering' or 'wilt under pressure.'

Commentary

After citing the example of men of Allah fighting along with previous prophets who remained undeterred and unweakened against heavy odds, the Holy Qur'an mentions another great quality of the men of Allah who, inspite of their own sacrificing conduct, kept praying to Allah Almighty to:

1. Forgive their past sins,

2. Condone any shortcomings that may have crept in during their present *Jihād* efforts,

3. Enable them to remain steadfast and

4. Make them prevail over enemies.

These prayers carry some important guidelines for Muslims by implication.

Never be proud of a good deed

A true Muslim who knows things as they are is not supposed to wax proud of what he accomplishes by way of a good deed. No matter how great the accomplishment or how exacting the struggle in the way of Allah, he just does not have the right to pat himself on his back, for his very accomplishment of a good deed, in all reality, is the direct outcome of nothing but the grace and mercy of Allah Almighty. In fact, no good deed can even issue forth without it. It appears in a *ḥadīth*:

فو الله لولا الله ما اهتدينا
ولا تصدقنا ولا صلينا

> Had it not been for the grace and mercy of Allah, we would have not received guidance in the straight path, nor we would have been able to pay *zakāh* and perform *ṣalāh*.

Seek Forgiveness from Allah under all conditions:

As for a good deed one gets the ability to perform, the truth lies in realizing that it is not within one's control to perform that deed exactly in accordance with the demands of the supreme magnificence of the One who holds the reins of the Creation and Command in His hands. No matter how hard one tries to do things correctly but falling short is inevitable, specially when it comes to doing things as is the due and right of Allah. Therefore, the seeking of forgiveness is also necessary during the very course of such a deed.

Pray for steadfastness and consistency in good deeds:

It is not possible to predict the continuity of a good deed. Who can say for sure that he will be given the ability to go on doing his good deed in the future also just as he is doing it now? All this is a matter of what is known as *Taufīq*, the God-given ability to perform what is good. Therefore, we should repent over any shortcomings in what we are doing in the present and pray that Allah makes us steadfast and

persistent in the future. For a true Muslim, this prayer should become his second nature.

It should be noted that the prayer for the forgiveness of past sins, appearing first, is a subtle hint to the fact that pain caused or defeat suffered in this mortal life is, more than often, a reflection of one's past sins which can be cured through repentance and seeking of forgiveness.

The last verse promises a good reward for the men of Allah in this world as well as in the other. It means that, right here in this mortal world, Allah Almighty gives them ultimate supremacy over the enemies and grants them success in their mission. Then comes the reward in the Hereafter. That reward is certainly the real one, an ideal state of peace and happiness which will never fade out. This factor has been pointed out by the addition of the word حُسْنٌ : (*ḥusn*: beauty) before 'return in the Hereafter' which makes it read:

وَحُسْنَ ثَوَابِ الْاٰخِرَةِ

And the better reward in the Hereafter. (148)

Verses 149 - 150

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اِنْ تُطِيْعُوا الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا يَرُدُّوْكُمْ عَلٰٓى اَعْقَابِكُمْ فَتَنْقَلِبُوْا خٰسِرِيْنَ ﴿١٤٩﴾ بَلِ اللّٰهُ مَوْلٰىكُمْ ۚ وَهُوَ خَيْرُ النّٰصِرِيْنَ ﴿١٥٠﴾

O those who believe, if you obey those who disbelieve they will make you turn back on your heels, then you shall turn losers. [149] **Instead, Allah is your Lord, and He is the best of all helpers.** [150]

When Muslims faced a temporary setback during the battle of Uḥud and rumours went around that the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been martyred, the hypocrites found an occasion for mischief under the shadows of a battle nearly lost. They said to Muslims: 'Now, that the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is no more with us, why should we not go back to our old faith and thus get rid of all conflicts between us?' This shows how ugly the conduct of hypocrites was and how avowed an enemy they were to Muslims.

In the verses appearing above, Muslims have been instructed not to listen to such enemies, nor to make them a party to any consultations among themselves, nor follow any advice given by them.

In the previous verses, it will be recalled, the instruction was to follow the men of Allah; here, the instruction is not to act upon the advice of hypocrites and anti-Islam people. Indeed, the instruction is to continue taking guard against them.

The Qur'ānic expression, 'they will make you turn back on your heels', means that the real objective of anti-Islam people is to disengage Muslims from their Faith through engineered suspicion either overtly or covertly, the later method being designed and implemented in a manner which serves to gradually decrease the love and honour of Islam from their hearts resulting in a reversal of their position. Thus, those aiming to push Muslims in a state of loss cannot be their friends, even if they claim to be.

The statement, '...Allah is your Lord and He is the best of helpers' tells Muslims to place their trust in Allah and rely on His help alone. Even if their antagonists come up with plans of help, Muslims should not go by these against the injunctions of Allah and the Messenger.

Verses 151 - 152

سَنُلْقِي فِي قُلُوبِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا الرُّعْبَ بِمَا أَشْرَكُوا بِاللَّهِ مَا لَمْ
يُنَزِّلْ بِهِ سُلْطَانًا ۚ وَمَأْوَاهُمُ النَّارُ ۚ وَبِئْسَ مَثْوَى الظَّالِمِينَ
﴿١٥١﴾ وَلَقَدْ صَدَقَكُمُ اللَّهُ وَعْدَهُ إِذْ تَحُسُّونَهُمْ بِإِذْنِهِ ۚ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا
فَشِلْتُمْ وَتَنَازَعْتُمْ فِي الْأَمْرِ وَعَصَيْتُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا أَرَاكُمْ
مَا تُحِبُّونَ ۚ مِنْكُمْ مَنْ يُرِيدُ الدُّنْيَا وَمِنْكُمْ مَنْ يُرِيدُ الْآخِرَةَ ۚ ثُمَّ
صَرَفَكُمْ عَنْهُمْ لِيَبْتَلِيَكُمْ ۚ وَلَقَدْ عَفَا عَنْكُمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ ذُو فَضْلٍ
عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٥٢﴾

We shall put awe into the hearts of those who disbelieve, since they have associated with Allah something for which He has not sent any authority.

Their ultimate place is the Fire. And evil is the abode of the unjust. [51] **And Allah has surely fulfilled His promise to you when you, with His will, were killing them off** [1] **until you showed weakness and disputed in the matter and disobeyed after He had shown you what you liked. Among you there were some who were seeking the mundane and among you there were others who were seeking the Hereafter. After that He reversed your position against them, so that He may test you. And, of course, He has forgiven you. And Allah is All-Gracious to the believers.** [152]

The previous verses referred to Allah Almighty as 'the best of helpers'; recounted here are some incidents of Allah's help.

The word, *sulṭān*, rendered here as 'authority' includes all revealed or rational bases of their position. The promise of casting awe and fear into the hearts of the disbelievers in this verse was made in the background of the battle of Uḥud when the disbelievers of Arabia marched back to Makkah without any obvious reason and inspite of defeat overtaking Muslims (Bayḍāwī). However, after having covered a certain distance on their way to Makkah, they awoke to their folly. When they thought of marching back to Madīnah, Allah Almighty filled their hearts with such awe and fear that they could not muster the courage to do so. The most they could do was to hire a Madīnah-bound villager to go there and tell Muslims that they were coming back. But, this whole deal came into the knowledge of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in Madīnah through revelation. He marched to Ḥamrā' al-Asad to apprehend them but they had already run away from there.

This was the background in which the present verse was revealed.

The verses that follow recount, as pointed out earlier, Allah's help and support for Muslims in the battle of Uḥud.

Commentary:

The High Station of the Noble Companions:

As obvious, the noble Companions made an error of judgement during the battle of Uḥud which forms the subject of admonition and

1. These verses refer to the battle of Uḥud.

correction in the previous continuity of verses. But, equally worth noticing here are the graces of Allah Almighty showered on the noble Companions side by side with the element of warning. To begin with, by saying لِيَبْتَلِيَكُمْ (so that He may test you) it was made clear that this temporary setback did not come as punishment, rather, it was to test them. Then, comes the statement, وَلَقَدْ عَفَا عَنْكُمْ , which very clearly proclaims: 'And, of course, We have forgiven you.'

Did the Noble Companions tilt towards the material?

As stated in the verses, the noble Companions were split in two groups at that time; some sought the mundane while others sought the Hereafter. The question is as to what was done by these revered Companions which identifies them with the seekers of the mundane. Obviously, it was their intention to go and collect spoils which has been equated with the seeking of the mundane. Let us now figure out the reality. If they had held on to their assigned post of duty and, as a result, had not taken part in the collection of spoils, would it have made their due share in the spoil any lesser? And, did their participation entitle them to some larger share? The Law of Spoils as authentically proved by the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth is common knowledge. They, as the first observers of the operation of the Law, knew it beyond doubt that their due share in the spoils was under no condition subject to being more or less. The fact was that their share in the spoils would have remained the same whether they helped in the collection of spoils or remained on guard at the appointed place of duty.

Keeping this in view, it is obvious that their action cannot be classed as the unqualified pursuit of the material. Instead of that, it is participation in what *mujāhidīn* are supposed to do. However, given the workings of human nature, the thought of spoils entering their hearts at that time is not totally unimaginable. But, Allah Almighty has His ways with people; He very much likes to see the hearts of the Companions of His Messenger clean and untouched even by the remotest idea of any tilt towards material possession. So, this very idea of going to possess things of *dunyā* has been equated with 'seeking of the mundane' which explains the element of divine distaste for the action.

Verses 153 - 155

إِذْ تُصْعِدُونَ وَلَا تَلْوُونَ عَلَىٰ أَحَدٍ وَالرَّسُولُ يَدْعُوكُمْ فِي
أُخْرَاكُمْ فَأَثَابَكُمْ غَمًّا بِغَمٍّ لِّكَيْلَا تَحْزَنُوا عَلَىٰ مَا فَاتَكُمْ وَلَا
مَا أَصَابَكُمْ ط وَاللَّهُ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٥٣﴾ ثُمَّ أَنزَلَ عَلَيْكُم
مِّن بَعْدِ الْغَمِّ أَمَنَةً نُّعَاسًا يَغْشَىٰ طَائِفَةً مِّنكُمْ لا وَطَائِفَةٌ قَدْ
أَهَمَّتْهُمْ أَنفُسُهُمْ يَظُنُّونَ بِاللَّهِ غَيْرَ الْحَقِّ ظَنَّ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ ط
يَقُولُونَ هَل لَّنَا مِنَ الْأَمْرِ مِن شَيْءٍ ط قُلْ إِنَّ الْأَمْرَ كُلَّهُ لِلَّهِ ط
يُخْفُونَ فِي أَنفُسِهِم مَّا لَا يُبْدُونَ لَكَ ط يَقُولُونَ لَوْ كَانَ لَنَا مِنَ
الْأَمْرِ شَيْءٌ مَّا قُتِلْنَا هَاهُنَا ط قُل لَّوْ كُنتُمْ فِي بُيُوتِكُمْ لَبَرَزَ
الَّذِينَ كُتِبَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقَتْلُ إِلَىٰ مَضَاجِعِهِمْ ج وَلِيَبْتَلِيَ اللَّهُ مَا
فِي صُدُورِكُمْ وَلِيُمَحِّصَ مَا فِي قُلُوبِكُمْ ط وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ
الصُّدُورِ ﴿١٥٤﴾ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ تَوَلَّوْا مِنكُمْ يَوْمَ الْتَقَى الْجَمْعَانِ لا
إِنَّمَا اسْتَزَلَّهُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ بِبَعْضِ مَا كَسَبُوا ج وَلَقَدْ عَفَا اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ ط
إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ حَلِيمٌ ﴿١٥٥﴾

When you were going away, not even turning to look at anyone, and the Messenger was calling you from behind you. So, He awarded you sorrow for sorrow, so that you should not grieve (in future) on what you lost, nor on what you suffered. And Allah is All-Aware of what you do. [153]

Then, after the grief, He sent down tranquility upon you - a drowsiness overtaking a group of you. And another group was worrying about their own selves, cherishing thoughts about Allah which were not true - thoughts of ignorance. They were saying, "Is there anything in our hands?" Say, "The whole thing belongs to Allah." They conceal in their hearts what they do not disclose to you. They say, "If we had any say in the matter, we would have not been killed here." Say, "If you were in your homes, those destined to be killed

would have come out all the way to their (final) lying-places." And (all this was done) so that Allah may test your inner qualities and may purify what is in your hearts. And Allah is All-Aware of what lies in the hearts. [154]

Surely, those of you who turned back on the day when the troops faced each other, Satan had but made them slip for some of their deeds. And, of course, Allah has forgiven them. Certainly, Allah is Most-Forgiving, Forbearing. [155]

These verses form part of the several previous verses relating to the battle of Uḥud. The first verse here mentions the sorrows of the *ṣaḥābah*, the noble Companions of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. The long succeeding verse describes the antidote. The third verse reiterates that the form of defeat they faced was no punishment. It was a test to separate the true and sincere Muslims from the hypocrites. Finally comes the repeated proclamation that the mistake made by the noble Companions has been forgiven.

Commentary:

In the first verse here, the Holy Qur'ān describes the exit of the Companions from the battlefield, their inability to come back even when called by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in person, the consequent grief that afflicted him because of their conduct and, later on, the incidence of the Companions feeling sorry for the sorrow they brought on their master. According to *ḥadīth* narrations, when Sayyidnā Ka'b ibn Mālik called out to them, Muslims heard his call and reassembled.

The author of Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī resolves this by saying that the first call came from the Messenger of Allah himself which could not be heard by the Companions and they kept going the way they were going. That was the time when Sayyidnā Ka'b ibn Mālik called. Everybody heard him and reassembled.

In Bayān al-Qur'ān, Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thānavī has said that the real reason for this confusion was the news that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has fallen a martyr on the battlefield. When he called, there was obviously no refutation of the news with the call. Even if his voice can be

taken to have reached the retreating Companions, the possibility remains that it was not recognized. Finally, when Sayyidnā Ka'b ibn Mālik called out, his call included a refutation of this news mentioning the fact that the Messenger of Allah was alive. On hearing this, everybody took a sigh of relief and reassembled. As far as the displeasure of Allah and the sorrow of His Messenger are concerned, these can be explained by saying - if they had stayed unagitated and firm, they could have recognized the calling voice.

The Hardships at Uḥud: A Test, not Punishment :

The noble Companions as evident from: وَلِيَبْتَلِيَ اللّٰهُ مَا فِىْ صُدُوْرِكُمْ (154), were actually tested through their sufferings at the battle of Uḥud. This was no punishment. The objective was to make true and sincere Muslims distinct from the hypocrites. The mode was a 'test of inner qualities'.

The eloquent Qur'ānic expression اَثَابَكُمْ غَمًّا (He awarded you sorrow), which is suggestive of punishment, can be resolved by saying that the outward form was, no doubt, that of punishment but the real purpose was a sort of affectionate correction, something similar to a well-meaning reprimand from a father to his son or a teacher to his student. In common usage, this can be called a punishment of some sort, but this is, in all reality, a form of training and correction. This is very different from a pure legal punishment.

Why did Muslims suffer at Uḥud ?

The last part of verse 154 beginning with لِيَبْتَلِيَكُمْ (so that Allah may test) seems to indicate that the cause of hardships faced by Muslims was this wise divine arrangement. But, the statement: اِنَّمَا اسْتَزَلَّهُمُ الشَّيْطٰنُ بِبَعْضِ مَا كَسَبُوْا in the verse (155) following immediately seems to suggest that some past mistake of theirs is the cause of this Satanic effect.

The answer is that the particular past mistake was the obvious reason which gave Satan the incentive to make them slip once again, an effort in which the Satan incidentally succeeded. But there was much more to it; there were wise arrangements made by the Creator behind this slip and its outcome. These have been covered under the expression لِيَبْتَلِيَكُمْ :'so that Allah may test'. In Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī, a report from Zajjāj says that the Satan made them recall some of their sins in the presence of which they hesitated to appear before their Lord. So they moved away from *Jihād* hoping to fight later on following

personal correction and thus meet Allah as martyrs in *Jihād*.

One sin becomes the Cause of another:

From the last verse we discover that one sin drags in yet another sin, very much like one good deed which pulls in another good deed. In other words, all deeds - good and bad - have a sort of magnetic pull of their own. When a person accomplishes a good deed, experience shows that other good deeds become easy on him. His very heart starts desiring to do what is good and righteous. Similarly, a person who commits a sin finds that it has cleared the way for other sins. His very heart starts desiring to do what is sinful. Therefore, some elders say: ان من جزاء الحسنة الحسنة بعد ها ، وان من جزاء السّيئة السيئه بعدها 'the ready reward of a good deed is another good deed which a person is enabled to accomplish and the ready punishment of an evil deed is another evil deed the way to which has been cleared by the first.'

In Masā'ilus-Sulūk, Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thānavī has said: 'As explained in *ḥadīth,* sin makes the heart dark and when the heart goes dark, Satan prevails.'

The position of the Noble Companions in the sight of Allah Almighty :

As briefly stated earlier, the mistakes made by some noble Companions at the battle of Uḥud were intrinsically serious. The majority from among the fifty Companions who were commanded by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم to guard a hill-top strategic point, with clear instruction not to leave their duty-post, no matter what happens at the battle front underneath, moved away from their assigned place. Granted that the reason for their abandonment of the post of duty was an erroneous independent judgement, as they thought their side had won the battle. The order to guard their post, according to their view, had been carried out, therefore, they thought, they could go down and join in with the rest of Muslims. But, in reality, their action was in clear contravention of definite instructions given by the Holy Prophet ﷺ. This mistake of theirs motivated them to leave the battlefield, no matter how this is explained, as reported earlier from Zajjāj. Moreover, this retreat from the battlefield took place while the Messenger of Allah was with them unmoved from the front line and calling them back from behind them. If this situation is viewed without reference to

personalities and circumstances that action would certainly be classed as a very serious breach of conduct in a military encounter. In fact, of the many blames imputed to various Companions under the unfortunate genre of *Mushājarāt* (the mutual quarrels and armed confrontations between the noble Companions which took place after the Holy Prophet ﷺ) this would be rated as the most serious.

But, something more worthy of consideration is what Allah Almighty has done in their case inspite of all their mistakes. Stated right here in the present verses, is how their grief was physically changed into tranquility through drowsiness. Then, they were told that their suffering was no punishment; it was a matter of test. Then came the clearly worded proclamation of forgiveness for them. It will be recalled that these have appeared earlier, yet they have been reaffirmed here. There is an element of wisdom behind this repetition. The first time it was said, the purpose was to comfort the noble Companions themselves. Incidentally, here is a refutation of what the hypocrites said to Muslims. They chided them for not acting on their advice, as a result of which they (the Muslims) suffered all those hardships.

In short, all these related verses make it very clear that the Companions of the Messenger of Allah hold a unique position of affection in His sight inspite of such serious mistakes made by them. Not only that they have been pardoned and forgiven but actually they have been blessed with much more. They have been made special recipients of Allah's grace and mercy. This is what comes from Allah Almighty Himself through the authentic words of the Holy Qur'ān. A similar case, as reported in *ḥadīth,* relating to Sayyidnā Ḥāṭib ibn Abī Bilta'ah was brought before the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم . He had written a letter to the *mushrikīn* (disbelievers) of Makkah in which he had passed on information about Muslims living in Madīnah. When the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was told about it through a revelation, the letter was intercepted. The noble Companions were very angry with Sayyidnā Ḥāṭib ibn Abī Bilta'ah for what he had done. Sayyidnā 'Umar, may Allah be pleased with both of them, asked for permission to behead that 'hypocrite'. But, the Holy Prophet ﷺ knew that Ḥāṭib was no hypocrite; he was a true, sincere Muslim but he had made a

mistake inadvertently. So, he forgave him his mistake and declared that he was was one of the people (veterans) of Badr and, perhaps, Allah Almighty has enforced general pardon for all participants of Badr. (This narration appears in all authentic books of *aḥādīth*).

The Noble Companions: Lesson for Muslims :

It is based on this affirmation that the followers of Sunnah and Jamā'ah (*ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah*: Muslims who adhere to the practice of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and that of his blessed Companions رضى الله عنهم اجمعين) find the confirmation of their belief and practice. That is, even though the noble Companions are not above sin, for sins can be and have been committed by them, but despite this, it is not permissible for the Muslim community to ascribe any evil or defect to them in a derogatory manner. When Almighty and His Messenger ﷺ forgave such serious slips and errors coming from them and dealt with them generously and mercifully and gave them the great station of رضى الله عنهم ورضواعنه : 'may Allah be pleased with them and may they be pleased with Allah,' how can anyone claim to have the right to talk about anyone of them in a derogatory manner ?

This is why Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar رضى الله عنه , on hearing somebody satirize Sayyidnā 'Uthmān al-Ghanī and some noble Companions by saying that they had run away from the battlefield, the reference being to this incidence at Uḥud, said, 'Nobody has the right to criticize that which Allah has expressly proclaimed to have been forgiven (Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī).

Therefore, all doctrinal source-books of the *ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah* unanimously agree that it is *wājib* or necessary to honour the position of the noble Companions and to abstain from criticizing, mocking or speaking ill of them. It appears in al-'Aqā'id an-Nasfiyah:

ويكف عن ذكر الصحابه الا بخير

It is necessary that one should not talk about the Companions except in a good manner.

In Sharh al-Musāmarah, Ibn Humām has said:

اعتقاد اهل السنة تزكية جميع الصحابة والثناء عليهم

The belief of the followers of the Sunnah is that all Compan-

ions were purified and that they be remembered with praise.

This is what appears in Sharḥ Muwaqif:

يجب تعظيم الصحابة كلهم والكف عن القدح فيهم

It is obligatory to honour the Companions, all of them; and avoiding satire or criticism against them is equally mandatory.

Abridged below is what Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Taymiyyah has said in al-'Aqidatul Wāsiṭiyah:

"It is a cardinal belief of *Ahl al-Sunnah wal-Jama'ah* that Muslims must refrain from accusing or criticizing any Companion of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in the matter of disagreements or armed conflicts which may have come up among them. There is a reason for this. Most of the narrations imputing drawbacks in them which have creept into history are a pack of lies planted by enemies. They simply have no truth in them. Then, there are others in which the reality has been reversed by additions and alterations. Even if, there was some truth about something, that has to be taken as the independent judgement of the Companions in which they have no choice. Going a step further, we can assume a situation where they may not be helpless but be capable of using their choice, then, what works there is the Divine Law إِنَّ الْحَسَنَاتِ يُذْهِبْنَ السَّيِّئَاتِ that is, good deeds make up for the bad ones. And it is more than obvious that nobody can claim equality with them in the matter of good deeds. The good they did cannot be matched by the good done by anybody else. Similarly, nobody else can be more deserving of the mercy and forgiveness of Allah Almighty as compared to them. Therefore, nobody has the right to sit on judgement against them and call their deeds to account and in that process, criticise or speak ill of them."

Verses 156 - 158

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَقَالُوا لِإِخْوَانِهِمْ
إِذَا ضَرَبُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ أَوْ كَانُوا غُزًّى لَّوْ كَانُوا عِندَنَا مَا مَاتُوا

وَمَا قُتِلُوا ۚ لِيَجْعَلَ اللّٰهُ ذٰلِكَ حَسْرَةً فِىْ قُلُوْبِهِمْ ۗ وَاللّٰهُ يُحْيِي
وَيُمِيْتُ ۗ وَاللّٰهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ بَصِيْرٌ ﴿١٥٦﴾ وَلَئِنْ قُتِلْتُمْ فِىْ
سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ اَوْ مُتُّمْ لَمَغْفِرَةٌ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَرَحْمَةٌ خَيْرٌ مِّمَّا يَجْمَعُوْنَ
﴿١٥٧﴾ وَ لَئِنْ مُّتُّمْ اَوْ قُتِلْتُمْ لَاِ الَى اللّٰهِ تُحْشَرُوْنَ ﴿١٥٨﴾

O those who believe, do not be like those who disbelieve and say about their brethren while they travel on the earth or are involved in fighting, "Had they been with us, they would have not died nor would they have been killed." The result is that Allah makes it a remorse resting in their hearts. And Allah gives life and brings death. And of what you do, Allah is watchful. [156]

And if you are killed in the way of Allah or die, the forgiveness from Allah, and mercy, is far better than what they accumulate. [157] **And if you die or get killed, it is towards Allah that you shall be gathered.** [158]

The saying of the hypocrites in verse 156 here is an extension of what was cited in verse 154 earlier : لَوْ كَانَ لَنَا مِنَ الْاَمْرِ شَيْءٌ مَّا قُتِلْنَا هٰهُنَا : "If we had any say in the matter, we would have not been killed here." Since there were chances that sincere Muslims may be affected by such doubt-creating devices used by hypocrites, Muslims were asked through these verses to remain unconcerned with such sayings and doings and adhere to the belief that the span of life and the time of death are ordained by Allah alone.

Verse 159

فَبِمَا رَحْمَةٍ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ لِنْتَ لَهُمْ ۚ وَلَوْ كُنْتَ فَظًّا غَلِيْظَ الْقَلْبِ
لَانْفَضُّوْا مِنْ حَوْلِكَ ۖ فَاعْفُ عَنْهُمْ وَاسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ وَشَاوِرْهُمْ
فِى الْاَمْرِ ۚ فَاِذَا عَزَمْتَ فَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللّٰهِ ۗ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يُحِبُّ
الْمُتَوَكِّلِيْنَ ﴿١٥٩﴾

So, it is through mercy from Allah that you are gentle to them. Had you been rough and hard-hearted, they would have dispersed from around you. So, pardon them and seek Forgiveness for them. And consult them

in the matter, and once you have taken a decision, place your trust in Allah. Surely, Allah loves those who place their trust in Him. [159]

Even though, the mistake made by Muslims and the abandonment of the battle front by them had caused grief to the Holy Prophet ﷺ, he did not reproach them for this because of his high morals and his natural way of forgiving and forgetting. He did not even deal with them sternly as may have been in order. But, Allah Almighty willed to see that the Companions of His Messenger are comforted and the sense of shock and shame they had for their mistake is washed away. So, in this verse, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is being asked to deal with them more gently and affectionately and consult with them in matters of concern.

Commentary:

The traits of a patron

The Companions of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم loved him far beyond the concerns of their own lives and belongings. When they made a mistake acting against his express instructions, there were two dangers. Firstly, it could further increase their sense of shock and affect their normal emotional-rational response. They could even lose hope of mercy, especially when they realized what mistake they had made and how disobedient they had been to the command of their leader. This danger was already eliminated in the previous verse where 'We awarded you sorrow for sorrow' means that the return of this mistake has already been given right here in this mortal world and the account in the Hereafter lies clean.

Secondly, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was hurt as a result of this mistake, physically. The spiritual discomfort was already there. It was likely that these two factors may contribute to making the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم unhappy with his Companions which, in turn, may become a hinderance in his mission to teach and train them. In order to counter this likelihood, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was asked to forgo their mistake, forgive their shortcoming from the depth of his heart and deal with them gently and affectionately in the future as well.

The subject has been taken up with unusual delicacy of style in the

Holy Qur'ān which, as a corollary, covers some important points of guidance.

1. The diction used to convey the related command to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is eloquently suggestive of his personal praise, as well as that of his unique human majesty, that is, he has these attributes in him already built in.

2. The addition of فَبِمَا رَحْمَةٍ (So, it was through mercy from Allah) before the statement is there to affirm that the presence of such attributes of perfection in his person is but through Divine mercy. This is no personal perfection in its own right. Then, by placing the word, '*rahmah*' (mercy) in an indefinite form, hint has been made towards the great and extensive spread of Allah's mercy which, in turn, makes it very obvious that this mercy is not restricted to the noble Companions only, but extends in full to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم himself for Allah has made him identified with such perfect attributes.

3. The third point made here establishes that the presence of the qualities of gentle manners, good morals, forgiveness and generosity in him serve a purpose. Had these been not there in him, the mission of educating human beings with which he is charged would have never been accomplished as desired. Rather than seek to correct and raise the level of their morals in his company, people would have run away from him.

The Etiquette of *Da'wah*:

By combining elements cited above, there emerges a set of distinct qualities necessary for preaching, no matter what form it takes. Anyone who embarks on the mission of inviting people to Allah, explaining His guidance and calling people towards the right conduct in their best interest, must first inculcate these qualities in him. The reason is obvious. When a possible 'rough' or 'hard-hearted' approach, even if it happens to come from the very dear Messenger of Allah Almighty, has not been considered fit, who else can dare to gather people created by Allah around him with hostility and negative morals and still hope to seek a change in their behaviour.

In this verse, Allah Almighty has said: 'Had you been rough and hard-hearted, they would have dispersed from around you.' This indi-

cates that harshness, in conduct or language, is sheer poison for a *da'wah* worker or a leader conveying Allah's message to people. This is a sure way to undo what one intends to achieve.

Then, the verse says: فَاعْفُ عَنْهُمْ 'So, pardon them'. This indicates that a *da'wah* worker or reformer of people should never punish them for their mistakes. Instead, he should forgive and forgo. It is important that he does not get excited or angry when his listeners speak ill of him. The truth is that he should rise higher and treat his tormentors with compassion and leniency.

Soon, after that, the verse says: وَاسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ 'And seek forgiveness for them'. This seeking of forgiveness for them from Allah Almighty points out to an unusual rule of behaviour. Not only that he should remain patient in what is painful, the Messenger is being asked not to forget seeking their good with utmost sincerity. The best that can be wished for them is their salvation in the life-to-come, the good that waits for them in *Ākhirah*. So, the Messenger is being asked to pray for their forgiveness in order that Allah spares them from His punishment.

Finally, it has been said: وَشَاوِرْهُمْ فِي الْأَمْرِ :'And consult them in the matter' which means that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is to seek their advice in matters of concern so that they are fully satisfied and emotionally at peace, as the Messenger of Allah, by following this instruction, will be giving an external form to his intention of doing what is good for them. Thus, the act of his asking them to sit in consultations with him will become an act of mollifying grace.

After having asked the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم to consult with his Companions, the verse concludes with the instruction on final decision-making. As regards consultation, the Holy Qur'ān has given clear injunctions at two places. The first one appears right here in the verse under commentation while the second one appears in a verse of Sūrah al-Shūrā (42:38) where one of the qualities of true Muslims has been identified as وَأَمْرُهُمْ شُورَىٰ بَيْنَهُمْ (Every matter of theirs is settled by mutual consultation). There are places where the instruction to consult appears secondarily, for instance, under injunctions relating to suckling in Sūrah al-Baqarah (2:233) where it is said: عَنْ تَرَاضٍ مِّنْهُمَا وَتَشَاوُرٍ (Now, if they want to wean, by mutual consent, and consultation, there is no sin on them). The matter of consultation involves some important

problems and rulings, therefore, it needs to be explained in some detail which follows.

1. The Meaning of أَمْر : Matter and شُوْرٰى : Consultation.

The word *amr* is applied for several shades of meaning in the Arabic language. In common usage, it refers to any saying or doing which is of great importance. It is also used to mean an injunction, order, command, rule or authority, the last one being what is meant in the Qur'ānic expression أُولِي الْأَمْرِ (*uli l'amr*). Then, the word is also applied to mean a particular attribute of Allah Almighty which finds mention in several verses of the Holy Qur'ān, such as: أَلَا لَهُ الْخَلْقُ وَالْأَمْرُ (Beware, for Him alone is the creation and the command - 7:54); إِلَيْهِ يُرْجَعُ الْأَمْرُ كُلُّهُ (To Him the whole matter shall be returned - 11:123), إِنَّ الْأَمْرَ كُلَّهُ لِلّٰهِ (The whole thing belongs to Allah - 3:154); أَمْرُهُ إِلَى اللّٰهِ (His matter is upto Allah - 2:275) and according to authentic scholars, the use of the word, *amr,* in قُلِ الرُّوحُ مِنْ أَمْرِ رَبِّي (Say: 'The spirit is by a command of my Lord') (17:85) carries the same meaning as identified in the verses appearing immediately above.

As far as the meaning of the word, *amr,* in the Qur'ānic verses وَشَاوِرْهُمْ فِي الْأَمْرِ (And consult them in the matter -3:159) and وَأَمْرُهُمْ شُورٰى بَيْنَهُمْ (And a matter of theirs is (settled) by a consultation between themselves -42:38) is concerned, it can be said that there is the possibility to assign both the first as well as the second. If it is said that the word has been used here in the first sense while the second meaning is inclusive therein, that would not be something far-fetched since affairs relating to command and authority are all very important. Therefore, the word, *amr* as used in the verses quoted immediately above means every matter or affair which is particularly important irrespective of whether it belongs to the area of authority or mutual dealings.

The Arabic words, *shūrā* (counsel), *mashwarah* (consultation) and *Mushāwarat* (mutual consultation) mean the soliciting of advice and counsel in something that needs deliberation. Therefore, the expression وَشَاوِرْهُمْ فِي الْأَمْرِ in the present verse means that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been commanded here to consult with or seek the advice of his noble Companions in matters that need deliberation, which include those of authority and government.

Similarly, the verse from Sūrah al-Shūrā cited above - وَاَمْرُهُمْ شُوْرٰى بَيْنَهُمْ - means that in every important matter (which) needs deliberation, whether it belongs to the field of authority and government or to something important other than these, the customary practice of true Muslims is that they work through mutual consultation.

2. The Status of Consultation in Islamic Law

From the statements of the Holy Qur'ān cited above and from related *aḥādīth* of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, it becomes clear that mutual consultation in a matter likely to have more than one opinion, whether it be related to the concerns of authority or to an issue other than that, is a *sunnah* of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and the noble Companions رضى الله عنهم and is a source of blessings in the mortal world and in the eternal life of the Hereafter. This view has the support of the Holy Qur'ān and the Ḥadīth. As far as matters which relate to people, such as the affairs of authority and government, are concerned seeking consultation in them is obligatory. (Ibn Kathīr)

In his Shu'bul-'Īmān, al-Baihaqi has reported from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar رضى الله عنه that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said: 'A person who intends to do something, then goes in consultation and comes up with a decision to do or not to do that, he gets from Allah Almighty guidance towards an option which is correct and beneficial.'

It appears in *aḥādīth*: 'When your rulers are from the best among you and your rich people are generous and your affairs are decided through mutual consultation, then, to live on the surface of the earth is better for you. And should your rulers be the worst among you and your rich people be close-fisted and your affairs be entrusted to women, then, to be buried under the earth shall be better than your continuing to live.'

It means that, when the worship of desires overpowers you, so much so that you, ignoring all concerns of the good and the bad, the harmful and the beneficial, simply to seek the goodwill of a woman, entrust your affairs in her hands, then, for you, death is better than living through those times. Otherwise, seeking the opinion of a woman as well while making consultations is no taboo, and certainly not prohibited. This is proved by the consistent practice of the Holy

Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and his blessed Companions. In the verse from Sūrah al-Baqarah (2:233) cited a little earlier, the Holy Qur'ān has said: 'Now, if they want to wean, by mutual consent, and consultation, there is no sin on them.' Since this matter here concerns the woman, therefore, consultation with the woman has been specially made binding on the man.

In a *ḥadīth*, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been reported to have said: المستشار مؤتمن اذا استشير فليشره بماهو صانع لنفسه :'The person whose counsel is sought is a trustee. When he counsels, then, he must counsel with what he would propose to his ownself (to do otherwise is a breach of trust)'. This *ḥadīth* has been reported with good authority from Sayyidnā 'Alī by al-Ṭabarānī in al-Mu'jam al-Awsaṭ (see al-Maẓharī).

At this point, it is necessary to bear in mind that consultation is an act of Sunnah only in situations where some clear and categorical injunction from the Qur'ān or *Ḥadīth* does not exist. Otherwise, in the presence of a clear and categorical injunction of the Sharī'ah, no consultation with anybody is needed. This is not permissible either. For example, if somebody went about consulting in - 'should I make my *ṣalāh* or should I not?' 'Should I pay my *zakāh* or should I not?' or 'Should I perform my Ḥajj or should I not?' - then, this would be absurd. These are not things you consult about. They are absolutely mandatory under the Sharī'ah of Islam. However, the option of making consultation about how to go for Ḥajj is open and one can seek advice on questions like - should he go this year, or next; should he go by sea, or by air; should he go by land, or by some other method.

The same holds true about *zakāh*. One can consult about where and on whom it has to be spent, for the Sharī'ah has left these on the choice of the payer.

In a *ḥadīth*, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been reported to have explained this himself. Sayyidnā 'Alī رضى الله عنه says that he asked the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم : 'If, after you, we are confronted by a situation the injunction for which has not been explicitly revealed in the Qur'ān, and about which we have heard nothing from you as well, what are we supposed to do?' The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: 'For a matter like this, get together from among you pious men who are consistently devoted to the worship of their Lord and who have deep

and extensive understanding of the Faith (*fuqahā'*) and decide the matter following their mutual counsel. Do not decide on the basis of someone's solitary opinion.'

The first, out of the two things that we learn from this *ḥadīth* is that consultation is not restricted to worldly affairs. Instead, the fact is that mutual consultation in situations where clear *nuṣūṣ* (plural of *naṣṣ* meaning textual authority) from the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth in matters governed by the injunctions of Sharī'ah do not exist is an act of Sunnah. We can say that mutual consultation will be an act of Sunnah if made in situations where textual authority from the Qur'ān and Sunnah is not available. The second rule we learn is that advice should be taken from people who are known for their understanding of the Faith and devotion to their obligations to Allah (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī) Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, to whom the deduction given above is credited, has reported another *ḥadīth* from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضی اللہ عنہ which says: استرشدوا العاقل ولا تعصوہ فتندموا (Seek counsel from the wise person and do not act against it, otherwise you will regret.).

By putting the above two *aḥādīth* together, we learn that two qualities are necessary for the members of the consultative council. Firstly, they should be wise, perceptive and advice-worthy, and secondly, they should be pious and devoted to *'ibādah*. In other words, they should be deserving of giving advice and should be God-fearing in their conduct. If the matter to be discussed involves problems relating to Islamic Law, it is incumbent that they be *faqīh* (juriconsult: expert in Islamic Law and Jurisprudence) as well.

Consultation of the Holy Prophet ﷺ with his Companions

The verse under discussion here orders the Holy Prophet ﷺ to consult his Companions رضی اللہ عنہم. This raises a certain difficulty here. Is'nt it that he is the Messenger of Allah and the blessed recipient of revelation? Why, then, should he need to consult anyone? Since, everything can come to his knowledge through the medium of revelation from Allah Almighty, some scholars interpret this command to consult by saying that the Messenger of Allah was neither in need to be counselled, nor anything he did depended on such counsel. The command to consult given to him is simply to honour the blessed Companions and mollify their broken hearts. But, Imām Abū Bakr al-Jaṣṣāṣ does not

agree with this view. According to him this is not correct, for being involved in consultation - while knowing that one's counsel will not be acted upon, nor would it affect any proceedings of the agenda - will make the whole thing ineffectual. If so, no heart will be mollified and no honour will be sustained. Instead, the truth of the matter is that a course of action to be taken by the Messenger of Allah is identified through revelation directly by Allah Almighty. This holds good in all general matters. But, there are certain matters which, under the dictates of the wisdom and mercy of Allah Almighty, are left to the opinion and discretion of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم . It is in such matters alone where consultation is needed, and these are the kind of matters in which he has been commanded to seek consultation. The history of the consultative sittings of the Messenger of Allah confirms this view.

When the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم consulted with the Companions about the battle of Badr, they said that should he ask them to jump into a river, they would do just that; and if he commanded them to march to a far out place such as Bark al-Ghamad, they will be with him; and they would never act like the companions of Mūsā عليه السلام who said: 'Go, you and your Lord, and fight the disbelievers' - 5:24;. on the contrary, we shall fondly submit: 'You lead the way, we shall fight the enemy with you, in front of you and in the rear and the right and the left.'

Similarly, he consulted them about the battle of Uḥud asking them if they should defend Madīnah by staying inside the city limits or should they go out of the city limits and confront the enemy in the open. The general opinion of the Companions was that they should do the latter and this was what he accepted to do. In the battle of Khandaq, the question of accepting peace under the terms of a particular treaty came up for discussion. Sayyidnā Sa'd ibn Mu'ādh and Sa'd ibn 'Ubādah رضى الله عنهم opposed the proposed treaty on the grounds that it was inappropriate. It was the opinion of these two Companions that he finally accepted. When he went into consultations on a matter pertaining to Hudaybiyyah, the opinion of Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضى الله عنه was the basis of his final decision. The Companions were also consulted following the incident of *Ifk* (false imputation against Sayy-

idah 'Ā'ishah (رضی اللہ عنها) but this and all other matters pointed out were those in which no particular position to be taken by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was determined through revelation.

To sum up, being a prophet, a messenger and a recepient of revelation is not a bar against consultation. Moreover, in the case of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم it cannot be said that his seeking of counsel from the Companions was ever designed to please them artificially, or that it was virtually ineffectual in the conduct of affairs. On the contrary, the truth is that there were many occasions when he accepted the opinion of those present during consultation even if it happened to be against his own. In fact, in some situations where a particular line of action had not been determined for the Holy Prophet ﷺ through revelation, and in its absence he had worked through consultation, there is great divine wisdom. The objective is that the practice of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم comes to be established for all future generations of Muslims. Thus, the seeking of consultation as a Sunnah shall become binding on the whole *ummah* of the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. Imagine when he himself has not been left free of the need of consultation who else can claim to be free of such need? For this reason, the method of mutual consultation always continued to be operative during the blessed times of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his noble Companions رضی اللہ عنهم particularly in matters where there was no clear injunction in the Qur'ān and Sunnah. When the Holy Prophet ﷺ passed away from this mortal world, the noble Companions continued following his practice. Still later, mutual consultation was resorted to as the modality to deduce rulings of Islamic Law in matters where clear injunction was not found in the Qur'ān and Sunnah. This was actually the method taught by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in answer to a question put by Sayyidnā 'Alī رضی اللہ عنه.

4. The Status of Consultation in an Islamic State:

As stated earlier, the Holy Qur'ān has given clear instructions about *mashwarah* or consultation at two places. One appears right here in the verse under study; the other one comes up in verse 42:38 of Sūrah al-Shūrā where one of the many qualities of true Muslims has been mentioned as وَأَمْرُهُمْ شُورَىٰ بَيْنَهُمْ which means that their affairs are settled by mutual consultation. At both these places the word, *amr*

(matter) has been mentioned along with *mashwarah* (consultation). Discussed in detail earlier, the word, *amr,* signifies any important saying or doing, while at the same time, it is applied to injunction, rule or authority or government. No matter which of the two meanings is taken, consultation in the affairs of the government emerges as invariably necessary, based on these verses. If one elects to take this to mean the affairs of the government, then, the necessity is all the more obvious. In case, the word is taken in its general sense, the affairs of a government being important and far-reaching in effect, would still be considered as affairs in which consultation will be inevitable. Therefore, it is one of the duties of the Muslim *Amīr,* the chief executive of the community, that he should seek the counsel of those responsible for the affairs of the government in matters that are important. The verses of the Qur'ān quoted above and the consistent practice of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, and of the rightly-guided Caliphs is a clear proof of this requirement.

These two verses not only highlight the need for consultation very clearly, they also point out to some basic principles of Islam's system of government, and its constitution. The Islamic government is a government by consultation in which the *amīr* or chief executive is chosen by consultation and definitely not as a matter of family inheritance. It is a *barakah* of Islamic teachings that this principle is recognized all over the world, in one or the other form, so much so that hereditary monarchies too are moving towards this arrangement, willingly or unwillingly.

But, let us go back 1400 years in history when the super-powers were Cyrus and Ceaser. The common factor between them was that they both headed hereditary empires and the authority of government was vested in their own persons. Thus, one man ruled millions, not on the basis of ability or capacity, but on the strength of the cruel principle of hereditary possession of sovereignty. This form of government, an insult to all human beings, was the way all over the world except Greece where the early teachings of a democratic order of life had yet to translate into principles that would go on to establish a stable government. Instead of that, these ideas relegated into a branch of Aristotelian philosophy. As opposed to this, Islam demolished the

unnatural principle of government through heredity and gave the choice of appointing and dismissing the chief executive to the people - a power they could use through their representatives shouldering the responsibilities of the affairs of the state. The world, once stuck in the quagmire of traditional monarchy, came to know bout this natural and just system through Islamic teachings and this happens to be the spirit of a system of government we now know as democracy.

But, modern democracies, since they appeared as a reaction to cruel monarchies, came out with an equal lack of moderation. They went on to give the masses the sense of being the absolute, the ultimate entity, an unbridled sovereign of the system of government and the law of state, to the extent that their minds and hearts became alienated from the very concept of God, the Creator of the earth and the heavens and of all human beings, not to say much about the concept of His real Sovereignty and Rule, which comes as a result of that cardinal belief. Now the situation has reached a stage where their 'democracy' has started taking the restrictions imposed by Allah Almighty on public choice - which in itself was conferred on human beings by Him - as something of a burden, contrary to justice and equity (of their brand).

The way Islamic Law liberated the whole world from Cyruses, Ceasers and other despotic monarchies, it has also shown the way of God to western democracies trying to hide from Him behind secular curtains. Islam's way is no more a secret. Its teachings clearly say that the rulers and the ruled, the governments and their peoples are all subject to the Law given by Allah Almighty. The masses, their representative assemblies, law-making, appointment and removal of office-holders must operate within the parametres set by Allah Almighty. It is their duty to see that full consideration is given to ability and merit, in the choice of the chief executive, holders of offices and responsible positions. In addition to that, their honesty and trustworthiness should be weighed and tested. When it comes to selecting the chief executive of their government, they must select the one who is the best of all in knowledge, fear of Allah, honesty, trustworthiness, ability and political experience. Even this chief executive, elected though he may be, is not totally free, unchecked and despotic. He has to seek counsel

from those who are capable of giving such counsel. The Holy Qur'ān bears witness to this and so does the constant practice of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and of the great rightly-guided Caliphs, may Allah be pleased with them all. Who else can claim to be more just than them?

Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنه has said:

لَا خِلَافَةَ إِلَّا عَنْ مَشْوَرَةٍ

There is no *Khilāfah* (Caliphate) unless it be with consultation. (Kanzul-'ummāl vide Ibn Abī Shaybah)

Government by consultation is a basic Islamic requirement so much so that a chief executive or head of the state, if he ever unfetters himself from the need for consultation or takes counsel from those who are not fit to give counsel from the point of view of the Sharī'ah of Islam, has to be removed of necessity.

ذكر ابن عطية انّ الشورى من قواعد الشريعة وعزائم الاحكام ومن لايستشير اهل العلم والدّين فعزله واجب، هذا مالا خلاف له (البحر المحيط لابى حيان)

It appears in al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ of Abī Hayyān: Ibn 'Atiyyah رحمه الله said that Consultation is one of the basic principles of Islamic Law and Faith. He who does not consult with those who know must be removed as a matter of obligation. This is what nobody differs about.

By making consultation mandatory, the blessings that would benefit the Islamic state and its citizens could be measured by what the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said about consultation. Ibn 'Adī and al-Baihaqī have reported from Sayyidnā ibn 'Abbās رضى الله تعالى عنه that when this verse was revealed, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: 'Allah and His Messenger do not need this consultation, but Allah Almighty has certainly made it a source of mercy for my community' (Bayān al-Qur'ān).

The purport is, if Allah Almighty had so willed, He would have conveyed everything to His Messenger through revelation. It was within His power not to leave any need for consultation in anything. But, it was in the best interest of the Muslim community that Allah Almighty helped establish the practice of consultation through His

Messenger. This is why many matters were left without any mention and about which no particular revelation was sent down. About these, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم was instructed to seek consultation.

5. Consultation: Decision-Making after a difference of opinion:

What happens when opinions differ on a certain matter? Would it be decided on the contemporary parliamentary principle? Would the chief executive be compelled to enforce the decision of the majority? Or, would he have the right to take a course of action on the basis of powerful arguments and obvious welfare of the state, coming from any side, no matter whether in a majority or a minority? From the Holy Qur'ān and Ḥadīth and from the constant practice of the noble Prophet ﷺ and his Companions, it cannot be proved that the *amīr* of Muslims, their head of the state is helplessly bound by the decision of the majority. On the contrary, some hints from the Qur'ān and clarifications from the Ḥadīth and the practice of the Companions make it very evident that the *Amīr* can, in the event of a difference of opinion, use his discretion and go by any of the several courses of action, irrespective of the fact that it comes from the majority or the minority. There is no doubt that the *Amīr* will do his best to look into other opinions as well to satisfy himself fully, but should the majority come to agree on one opinion, this could, at times, become a source of satisfaction to him.

A close look at this verse would show that the Holy Prophet ﷺ, after he has been commanded to seek counsel, is being told: فَإِذَا عَزَمْتَ فَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللهِ : '...and once you have taken a decision, place your trust in Allah'. Here, the word, *'azm* in *"azamta'* meaning a firm decision, one way or the other, has been ascribed to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. The text does not say, *'azamtum*, a second person plural, which would have suggested the participation of the Companions in the final making and enforcing of the decision. This hint proves that, once the process of consultation has been completed, the decision and its enforcement is the valid prerogative of the chief executive. There were times when Sayyidnā 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb would give his decision based on the opinion of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās, if his opinion was weightier argument-wise, something done even when present there would be Companions more senior than Sayyidnā ibn 'Abbās in age, learning

and seniority. There were many occasions when the Holy Prophet ﷺ has preferred the opinions of the revered *Shaykhayn* Abu-Bakr and 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہما against the majority of other Companions to the limit that people thought this verse was revealed for consultation with these two only. Ḥākim reports from Sayyidnā ibn 'Abbās in his Mustadrak:

عن ابن عباس فی قوله تعالی (وشاورهم فی الامر) قال ابوبکر و عمر (رضی الله عنهما) (ابن کثیر)

> Ibn 'Abbās says, that the pronoun in '*shāwirhum*' (consult them) refers to Abū Bakr and 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہما. (Ibn Kathīr)

The narration of Kalbi is clearer than this:

عن ابن عباس قال نزلت فی ابی بکر و عمر وکانا حواریي رسول الله ﷺ و وزیریه وابوی المسلمین

> Ibn 'Abbās says that this verse has been revealed for consulting with Abū Bakr and 'Umar. These two were special Companions of the Messenger of Allah and his Ministers and the patrons of Muslims. (Ibn Kathīr)

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah's blessings and peace be upon him, had once addressed Sayyidnā Abū Bakr and 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہما in the following words:

لواجتمعتما فی مشورة ما خلفتکما ط

> When you agree on an opinion, I do not decide against you. (Ibn Kathīr with reference to the Musnad of Aḥmad)

A doubt and its answer:

It is not likely that someone objects to this procedure of decision-making saying that all this is against democracy, a model of one-man rule and that this system might hurt the rights of the masses.

The answer is that the Islamic system of government has already taken care of this problem, for it has not given the masses the absolute right to make anyone they wish the *amīr* of an Islamic state. On the contrary, the mandate given to them requires that they must select a person they think is the best of all in knowledge, conduct, functional ability, Godliness and honesty, and then elect him to be the *amīr*. Now a person who has been elected in view of such elegant qualities and attributes should certainly not be subjected to restrictions usually

placed on the dishonest, the sinful and the debauch. Doing this would be against reason and justice, an act of discouragement to the genuine servant of people and a hinderance in the promotion of community-oriented action.

6. Do what you can, then place your trust in Allah:

At this point, specially at the conclusion of the verse, it is very important to bear in mind that this instruction has been given after having prescribed consultation in all important affairs including those of government. The crucial guideline given here is: Even after having made all preparations, when you finally decide to go ahead and do what has to be done, then that is the time when you do not simply (place your) trust in your reason, opinion, plans or preparedness but, instead of that, you should place your trust in Allah alone, for all these considered plans are in the direct control of the supreme Planner of all affairs and matters. With this in view, the less is said about human beings and their plans is better. Man himself is witness to the futility of his plans in the thousands of events in his life-time.

The statement, 'And once you have taken a decision, place your trust in Allah' also clarifies that placing one's trust in Allah does not mean that the efforts to provide means and make plans should be abandoned. The fact is that placing one's trust in Allah while leaving off means near at hand is contrary to the blessed practice of prophets, and against the teachings of the Holy Qur'ān. However, if one sits idle dreaming about distant means and irrelevant concerns, or if one relies solely on means and plans as effective agents and ignores the Prime Causer of means and the Planner-par-Excellence of all affairs and plans, then this would certainly be against *tawakkul*, the placing of trust in Allah.

Verses 160 - 171

إِنْ يَّنْصُرْكُمُ اللّٰهُ فَلَا غَالِبَ لَكُمْ ۚ وَإِنْ يَّخْذُلْكُمْ فَمَنْ ذَا الَّذِي
يَنْصُرُكُمْ مِّنْۢ بَعْدِهٖ ؕ وَعَلَى اللّٰهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿١٦٠﴾ وَمَا
كَانَ لِنَبِيٍّ اَنْ يَّغُلَّ ؕ وَمَنْ يَّغْلُلْ يَاْتِ بِمَا غَلَّ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ ۚ ثُمَّ
تُوَفّٰى كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَّا كَسَبَتْ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُوْنَ ﴿١٦١﴾ اَفَمَنِ

اتَّبَعَ رِضْوَانَ اللَّهِ كَمَن بَاءَ بِسَخَطٍ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَمَأْوَاهُ جَهَنَّمُ ۚ
وَبِئْسَ الْمَصِيرُ ﴿١٦٢﴾ هُمْ دَرَجَاتٌ عِندَ اللَّهِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ بَصِيرٌ بِمَا
يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٦٣﴾ لَقَدْ مَنَّ اللَّهُ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِذْ بَعَثَ فِيهِمْ
رَسُولًا مِّنْ أَنفُسِهِمْ يَتْلُو عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِهِ وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ
الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَإِن كَانُوا مِن قَبْلُ لَفِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ ﴿١٦٤﴾
أَوَلَمَّا أَصَابَتْكُم مُّصِيبَةٌ قَدْ أَصَبْتُم مِّثْلَيْهَا قُلْتُمْ أَنَّىٰ هَٰذَا ۖ
قُلْ هُوَ مِنْ عِندِ أَنفُسِكُمْ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ
﴿١٦٥﴾ وَمَا أَصَابَكُمْ يَوْمَ الْتَقَى الْجَمْعَانِ فَبِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَلِيَعْلَمَ
الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٦٦﴾ وَلِيَعْلَمَ الَّذِينَ نَافَقُوا ۚ وَقِيلَ لَهُمْ تَعَالَوْا
قَاتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أَوِ ادْفَعُوا ۖ قَالُوا لَوْ نَعْلَمُ قِتَالًا
لَّاتَّبَعْنَاكُمْ ۗ هُمْ لِلْكُفْرِ يَوْمَئِذٍ أَقْرَبُ مِنْهُمْ لِلْإِيمَانِ ۚ يَقُولُونَ
بِأَفْوَاهِهِم مَّا لَيْسَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا يَكْتُمُونَ
﴿١٦٧﴾ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا لِإِخْوَانِهِمْ وَقَعَدُوا لَوْ أَطَاعُونَا مَا قُتِلُوا ۗ
قُلْ فَادْرَءُوا عَنْ أَنفُسِكُمُ الْمَوْتَ إِن كُنتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿١٦٨﴾
وَلَا تَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِينَ قُتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أَمْوَاتًا ۚ بَلْ أَحْيَاءٌ
عِندَ رَبِّهِمْ يُرْزَقُونَ ﴿١٦٩﴾ فَرِحِينَ بِمَا آتَاهُمُ اللَّهُ مِن فَضْلِهِ
وَيَسْتَبْشِرُونَ بِالَّذِينَ لَمْ يَلْحَقُوا بِهِم مِّنْ خَلْفِهِمْ أَلَّا خَوْفٌ
عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ﴿١٧٠﴾ يَسْتَبْشِرُونَ بِنِعْمَةٍ مِّنَ اللَّهِ
وَفَضْلٍ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُضِيعُ أَجْرَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٧١﴾

If Allah helps you, there is none to overcome you. And if He abandons you, then, who is there who could help you after that? And in Allah the believers should place their trust. [160]

And it is not (conceivable) for a prophet to misappro-

priate the spoils. And whoever misappropriates, shall bring forth, on Doomsday, what he misappropriated. Then, everybody shall be paid, in full, what he has earned. And they shall not be wronged. [161]

How then, could one who submits to the pleasure of Allah be equal to him who returns with displeasure from Allah? And his ultimate place is the Fire. And what an evil end it is. [162]

They are of various ranks with Allah. And Allah is watchful of what they do. [163]

And Allah has surely conferred favour on the believers when He raised in their midst a messenger from among themselves who recites to them His verses and makes them pure and teaches them the Book and the Wisdom, while earlier, they were in open error. [164]

And how is it that, when you suffered a hardship the twice of which you had inflicted upon them, you say, "Where did this come from?" Say, "This is from your ownselves. Allah is surely Powerful over everything."[165]

And whatever you suffered on the day when the two troops faced each other was with the will of Allah and in order to know the believers [166] **and in order to know those who are hypocrites. And it was said to them, 'Come on, fight in the way of Allah, or defend." They said, "Had we known it to be a fight we would have certainly followed you." That day, they were nearer to disbelief than they were to Belief. They utter from their mouths what is not in their hearts. And Allah is the most-knowing of what they conceal.** [167]

Those who said about their brethren, while themselves sitting, "Had they obeyed us, they would have not been killed." Say, "Then repel death from yourselves if you are true." [168]

And never take those killed in the way of Allah as dead. Rather, they are alive, with their Lord, well-provided, [169] **happy with what Allah has given them of His grace; and they feel pleased with the good news, about those who, after them, could not join them, that there shall be no fear for them nor shall they grieve.** [170]

They feel pleased with blessing from Allah, and grace, and with the fact that Allah would not let the reward of the believers be lost. [171]

In the first verse (160) here, the recurring sense of grief that gripped the noble Companions after what happened at the battle of Uḥud is being removed through elegant counsel.

Verses 161-164 declare that the station of Allah's messenger is free of failings, that he exhibits the highest standard of trustworthiness, and that the very presence of his on the face of the earth is a great blessing and a favour shown to the people of the world.

Verses 165-167 explain the reason why Muslims faced hardships at Uḥud, while refuting the view of the hypocrites alongwith it in verse 168.

Towards the end, in verses 169-171, it has been said that those who lay down their lives in the way of Allah achieve the ultimate success, real, permanent and full. Details follow.

Commentary:

The verse مَا كَانَ لِنَبِيٍّ أَنْ يَّغُلَّ translated as, 'And it is not (conceivable) for a prophet to misappropriate the spoils - 161', has a particular background of its revelation. As a corollary, the problem of '*Ghulūl*', that is, misappropriation in the spoils, comes into focus.

Misappropriation in the spoils: A sin which cannot be ascribed to any prophet by any stretch of imagination:

The background, as narrated by al-Tirmidhī, is that a sheet was found missing from the spoils collected in the battle of Badr. Some people said that the sheet may have been, perhaps, taken by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم . If those who said that were hypocrites, the source speaks for itself. May be, this came from a less-initiated Muslim thinking that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had the right to do that. Thereupon, this verse was revealed which said that *ghulūl* is a great sin to be punished severely on Doomsday and that the very thought of linking this sin to a prophet is an ugly audacity, for prophets are free of all sins (معصوم : *ma'ṣūm*).

The word, *ghulūl* is also used in the absolute sense for *khiyānah*, a breach of trust, (misappropriation, pilferage and stealing). This is also

applied particularly to misappropriation in the spoils as the crime of stealing from the spoils is far more serious as compared to common thefts and filchings since spoils belong to the whole Muslim army as a matter of right. So, whoever steals from it steals from hundreds and thousands of people. Even if there comes the thought of making amends at some later stage, it would be very difficult to give back to everyone what was due to be given, or seek their forgiveness for the injustice done. This is contrary to other types of thefts where the owner of the stolen property is known. In this case, there is the chance that one may repent, if Allah gives the ability to do so, and that which was stolen could be returned back to the owner, or one could, at the least, exonerate himself from the blame by seeking forgiveness from him. This is illustrated by what happened at one of the battles fought by Muslims. Someone who had secretly withheld a portion of wool from the spoils thought about it after the distribution of the spoils was over. He brought it before the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم hoping to return it. But he, inspite of being 'mercy for the worlds' and far more generous to his community than fathers and mothers could ever dream to be for their children, he returned it back to him saying: How can I distribute it over the whole army now? Now it is you who would present yourself with it on the Day of Doom.

Therefore, the punishment for *ghulūl* or misappropriation is more severe as compared to common thefts. What else could be more severe for the misappropriator when he, before the eyes of the whole creation on the plains of resurrection and retribution, will find himself disgraced with what he had stolen all stacked on his neck? A narration from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah appearing in Al-Bukhārī and Muslim reports that the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said: 'Watch out, lest I see one of you with a camel loaded round his neck (and the announcement being made that this person had stolen a camel from the spoils). If this person asks me to intercede on his behalf, I shall tell him frankly that I had conveyed what Allah had commanded, now I cannot do anything about it.'

May Allah protect us from this disgrace of the Day we rise again which, according to some narrations, will be so hard on those who face it that they would wish to be sent to the fires of *Jahannam* in lieu of this terrible disgrace.

Misappropriation in *Waqf* properties and government Treasuries comes under *Ghulūl*: غلول

The same rule applies to mosques, religious schools and institutions, *khanqāhs* and properties of *awqāf* (endowments) since they represent the contribution of millions of Muslims. If an unfortunate misappropriator was to go about seeking to be forgiven for his evil act, how could he possibly go to each one of those millions. The same rule holds good for public or government treasury (*Bayt al-Māl*) because all citizens of a country have a right in it. One who steals from it steals from everyone. But, the problem is that these very holdings are such that a single owner does not sit over them. The caretakers become negligent. Avenues of pilferage abound. It is in such moneys and properties that a lot of thefts and misappropriations have become rampant all over the world with most people heedless to the evil end that awaits them. They do not realize that this is a terrible burden to haul onto the plains of Resurrection, not to speak of the punishment of Hell that is bound to come as a result of this crime. Then, last but not the least, comes the sad deprivation from the promised intercession of the Messenger of Allah. Let us all seek refuge from such a fate !

The Prophet of Islam: a great blessing for the Humanity

Verse 164 speaks of the great favour Allah has shown to the Muslims by sending the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم towards them. The basic functions assigned to him are also mentioned in the same verse. These are the same functions which were attributed to him in the prayer of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام as referred to by the Holy Qur'ān in Sūrah al-Baqarah. The details of these functions have already been discussed in the first volume of this book under the said verse (2:129).

What is new in the present verse is the statement: 'And Allah has surely conferred favour on the <u>believers</u>'. Two points about this statement are worth mentioning here:

(1) The words 'on the believers' in this verse apparently mean that the advent of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was a favour conferred on the Muslims only while at another place the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been held as رَحْمَةً لِّلْعَالَمِينَ :'the Mercy for all the worlds' which includes both Muslims and non-Muslims. In order to resolve this apparent contradiction one must understand that the particularization of this

quality with 'believers' in the present verse is very much like saying that the Holy Qur'ān is 'guidance for the God-fearing' (هُدًى لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ) while the fact that the Holy Qur'ān is a guidance for the whole humanity is clearly proved by other verses of the Qur'ān. However, there are places where this universal status of the Qur'ān has been particularized to the God-fearing. There is a common reason operating at both places, that is, the beneficial coming of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is a great blessing and a great favour for the Muslim and the non-Muslim alike, just as the Qur'ān is a Book of Guidance for the entire humanity. but the true Muslims and the God-fearing are the only ones who derived the fullest benefit out of these. At some places, therefore, the blessing and the guidance, were particularized with them.

(2) In order to explain the primary statement in the verse which declares that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is the greatest possible blessing and favour for the believers or for the whole humanity, it can be said that the statement hardly needed any explanation, only if modern man was not all that blind to the spiritual side of life and, at the same time, was sacrificing every good thing for the sake of naked material gains. Had this not been so, every reasonable person would have found out the reality of this great blessing all by himself without anybody having to tell him about it. But, the problem is that modern man has turned out to be no more than the smartest animal among the animals of the world. Tell him about 'favour' and 'blessing' and he would immediately start seeing what fills his stomach and whets his desires. He has practically stopped thinking about the basic reality of his being which is *rūḥ*, his spirit. That something good should happen to it and that something can go wrong with it are concerns he pays no heed to, not in the least. Therefore, there is the need to explain that man is not simply a being of bones and flesh. That is certainly not his reality. The reality of man is his *rūḥ*, the spirit which is contained within him. So far as this *rūḥ* is there in his body, man is what man is. His claims to humanity stand proved. He may be weak or he may be dying, nobody can dare usurp his property or take his rights away from him. But, once this *rūḥ* leaves his body, he ceases to be man, no matter how strong and well-built he may be with all parts of his body in their ideal form and shape. His ceasing to be what he was means that he now has no personal right in his own property and possessions.

Prophets come into the world to nurture the human spirit correctly, to make human beings out of men so that actions which issue forth from their bodies turn out to be beneficial to humanity and that they do not go about the world hurting other human beings like beasts and snakes. Instead of that, they should also think about their end and start working for the everlasting life of the Hereafter. Our blessed Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم who leads the way among the great company of prophets عليهم السلام has a unique majesty when it comes to the mission of making men real human beings. This was exactly what he did during his Makkan life. The men he turned out formed a society of human beings which stands way ahead of even the angels. Never had the earth, nor the heavens, seen such men, each one of them, a living miracle of the Messenger of Allah, may the blessings of Allah be upon him. What happens after them? The answer is that he left behind his own footprints, and theirs, as well as teachings and the methods to institute and promote, which can be followed and acted upon. Those who do so sincerely and honestly can still reach the stations that were reached by the noble Companions. These teachings are there for the entire humanity to benefit from. Therefore, his having graced this world and his being born generous is a great favour shown to the universal kingdom of human beings, though true Muslims are the ones who have reaped the fullest benefit from these blessings.

The Wisdom behind the hardships of the Muslims at *Uḥud*

The subject of verse 165, أَوَلَمَّآ أَصَٰبَتۡكُم translated as, 'And how is it that, when you suffered a hardship the twice of which you had inflicted upon them...' has appeared in several previous verses. Here, it comes for the sake of emphasis and further clarification because Muslims were very much disturbed as a result of this incident, so much so that some of them could not resist wondering why should they be suffering in that manner (أَنَّىٰ هَٰذَا) while they were in the company of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, doing *Jihād*.

In this verse, Muslims are being reminded that the hardship they were facing that day was only half of what they had already inflicted earlier at the battle of Badr, for seventy Muslims were martyred at Uḥud while seventy disbelievers were killed at Badr and seventy

others from them were taken prisoners by Muslims. The purpose behind this reminder is that Muslims should think positively in their present state of depression in view of the fact that they had already won a battle, inflicting a loss on the enemy twice as much as they had themselves suffered at their hands. Now, a winner like this need not surrender to sorrow and grief in the event defeat comes once, or less.

Secondly, and primarily too, the purpose of saying, قُلْ هُوَ مِنْ عِنْدِ اَنْفُسِكُمْ 'This is from your ownselves' at the end of this verse, is to tell Muslims that the hardship they have faced is not because the enemy is stronger or his forces overwhelming, but all that has been caused by some of their own shortcomings, that is, they fell short in obeying the command of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم .

Immediately later, in verse 166, the words *fa bi idhnillāhi*: فَبِاِذْنِ اللّٰهِ indicate that whatever happened there was with the leave and will of Allah Almighty operating behind which are many wise divine arrangements, some of them having been explained earlier. One such wise arrangement is that Allah will 'see' His true believers, and the hypocrites too, that is, the sincerity of Muslims and the hypocrisy of the hypocrites will become so clear that everybody could see it for himself. Here, the reference to Allah's knowing or seeing means seeing in the perspective of our own sense-experience in the mortal world. Otherwise, as far as Allah is concerned, He knows and sees everything, all the time. So, the wise arrangement became all the more clear when, at the time of the trial, the hypocrites bowed out of the harm's way while true Muslims stood undaunted in the middle of the battle front. Incidentally, there is another cause of comfort here in the martyrdom of Muslims in the battle, for Allah has conferred such rewards on them so that others should envy them. So, very appropriately, in: وَلَا تَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِيْنَ قُتِلُوْا فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ, the special merits of martyrs have been taken up in the verse that follows (169).

The special merits and ranks of those who sacrifice their lives in the way of Allah

In addition to this statement of the Holy Qur'ān, the merits of the martyrs have been taken up in great detail in sound *aḥādīth*. According to Imām Al-Qurṭubī, the *shuhadā'* (martyrs) have different ranks and states of being which should be taken into consideration

while looking at descriptions in *Ḥadīth* narrations.

The very first distinction of martyrs mentioned here is that they have not died; rather, they have begun to live eternally. At this point, it is worth noticing that their death and burial in a grave is something physically witnessed and realized by many, yet the Qur'ān has, in several verses, clearly instructed that they should not be addressed or taken as dead. What does this mean? If this was supposed to be an interim state of life, after death and before resurrection, referred to as the state of *Barzakh* in Islamic terminology, that would not take us very far, for that is something commonly experienced by believers and disbelievers both, when the spirit continues to live after physical death and goes through a question-answer situation following which the true and the righteous among Muslims are welcomed to comfort and the disbelievers and the sinners are consigned to the punishment of the grave. This is proved by the Qur'ān and Sunnah. Now, that the interim life of *Barzakh* is established as common to all, what is so special about *shuhadā'* (martyrs) ?

The answer is given by this very verse where it is said that the *shuhadā'*, i.e., those killed in the way of Allah, are blessed with provisions of Paradise from Him, and it is obvious that '*rizq*' (provision or sustenance) is needed by and given to the living. From here we know that sustenance starts reaching the *shahīd* (martyr) immediately after the *shahīd* leaves the frame of his life in the mortal world. In this manner, the *shahīd* enters into a special type of life right away from that point of time, something which has a status distinct from that of 'the dead' of our common experience (Qurṭubī).

There are no easy answers to questions such as - what is that distinct status and what is the nature of that life? The only answer is that its reality remains unknown to all except to the Creator of the universe; nobody has the power to know what is it - nor is there, for that matter, any need to know. Nevertheless, there are times when the effect of their special life does show up on their bodies buried in this world, that is, the earth they rest in does not eat them up but leaves them good and intact (Qurṭubī). There have been many incidents where this phenomena has been physically witnessed.

So, in summation, their first merit as pointed out in this verse is

their distinct perennial life; the second is their being well-provided from Allah and the third (فَرِحِيْنَ بِمَآ اٰتٰهُمُ اللّٰهُ) is that they shall always be happy with Allah's blessings and grace. The fourth (وَيَسْتَبْشِرُوْنَ بِالَّذِيْنَ لَمْ يَلْحَقُوْا بِهِمْ) merit is the good news given to them about their relatives and circle of friends they left behind in the mortal world that they too shall deserve the same blessings and ranks with their Lord if they remain good in deeds and are active in *Jihād* (170-171).

Al-Suddī says that a *shahīd* is informed beforehand when one of his close friend or relative is about to die. The news that a certain person was coming to them makes them as happy as one would usually be when an old friend, long separated by time and distance, comes to meet him.

The background of the revelation of this verse as narrated by Abū Dawūd on sound authorities from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās is as follows. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said to the noble Companions: 'When your brothers-in-faith fell martyrs at the battle of Uḥud, Allah Almighty placed their spirits in the bodies of green birds and set them free. They get their sustenance from the streams and fruit-trees of the Paradise following which they return to special candelabrums held suspending for them underneath the 'throne' (*'arsh*) of the All-Merciful. When they noticed the luxury of their life there, they said, 'Can anyone tell them (their grieving friends and relatives in the world) about how we live here so that they stop grieving about us and go about striving in *Jihād* as we did.' Allah Almighty said, 'We shall let them know about this state of yours.' Thereupon, this verse was revealed (Qurṭubī).

Verses 172 - 175

اَلَّذِيْنَ اسْتَجَابُوْا لِلّٰهِ وَالرَّسُوْلِ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَآ اَصَابَهُمُ الْقَرْحُ ۛ
لِلَّذِيْنَ اَحْسَنُوْا مِنْهُمْ وَاتَّقَوْا اَجْرٌ عَظِيْمٌ ﴿۱۷۲﴾ اَلَّذِيْنَ قَالَ
لَهُمُ النَّاسُ اِنَّ النَّاسَ قَدْ جَمَعُوْا لَكُمْ فَاخْشَوْهُمْ فَزَادَهُمْ
اِيْمَانًا ۖ وَّقَالُوْا حَسْبُنَا اللّٰهُ وَنِعْمَ الْوَكِيْلُ ﴿۱۷۳﴾ فَانْقَلَبُوْا
بِنِعْمَةٍ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَفَضْلٍ لَّمْ يَمْسَسْهُمْ سُوْٓءٌ ۙ وَّاتَّبَعُوْا رِضْوَانَ

اللّٰهِ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ ذُوْ فَضْلٍ عَظِيْمٍ ﴿۱۷۴﴾ اِنَّمَا ذٰلِكُمُ الشَّيْطٰنُ يُخَوِّفُ
اَوْلِيَآءَهٗ ۠ فَلَا تَخَافُوْهُمْ وَخَافُوْنِ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُّؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿۱۷۵﴾

Those who responded to the call of Allah and the Messenger, even after they had received the wound, for those of them who did good and feared Allah there is a great reward [172] -- **those to whom people said, "The people have gathered against you; so, fear them." It increased them in Faith and they said, "Allah is all-sufficient for us, and the best one to trust in."** [173]

So, they returned with bounty from Allah, and grace, with no evil having even touched them -- and submitted to the pleasure of Allah. And Allah is the Lord of great bounty. [174]

It is none but that Satan who frightens (you) of his friends. So, do not fear them. And fear Me if you are believers. [175]

Commentary :

The subject of the previous verse was the battle of Uḥud connected with which is the battle of Ḥamrā' al-Asad which forms the subject of the present verse. Ḥamrā' al-Asad is a place eight miles away from Madīnah.

The background of this event, mentioned briefly under introductory remarks about verse 151, is that the disbelievers of Makkah left the battlefield of Uḥud, reached a certain distance where they realized that they had made a mistake by retreating. Since they had almost won the battle, they should have gone for the final assault and finished off the Muslim forces. The thought so gripped them that they started getting ready to march back to Madīnah. But, Allah Almighty cast such awe and fear in their hearts that they found it more convenient to march back home to Makkah. They still left a message with a passing group of travellers to Madīnah asking them to give a warning to Muslims that they were coming back after them with all their awesome strength. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم found this out through a revelation and he reached Ḥamrā' al-Asad in hot pursuit (Ibn Jarīr, cited by Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī).

It appears in Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī that, on the second day of Uḥud, the

Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم made an announcement before his *mujāhidīn* that they have to pursue the disbelievers but the attacking company will be composed of those who were active participants in yesterday's battle. Two hundred *mujāhidīn* rose following this announcement.

A report in Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī states that seventy people stood up following the announcement by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم as to who was ready to go after the disbelievers. Among those were people who had been severely wounded in the battle a day earlier, some even had to be helped in walking. This blessed company marched to apprehend the disbelievers. When they reached Ḥamrā' al-Asad, they met Nu'aym ibn Mas'ūd who told them that Abū Sufyān has assembled together a much larger force once again and he is all set to invade Madīnah and eliminate its people. Injury-ridden and much weakened Companions heard this disturbing news yet it was in one voice that they said: 'We do not know him': حَسْبُنَا اللّٰهُ وَنِعْمَ الْوَكِيْلُ (Allah is sufficient for us and He is the best caretaker.)

On the one hand there was this news broken to Muslims so they get terrorized, but nothing of this sort happened to them. On the other hand, there was the instance of Ma'bad al-Khuzā'ī, a man from the tribe of Banī Khuzā'ah. He was on his way to Makkah. Though not a Muslim, he was a well-wisher of Muslims - his tribe was an ally of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم . So, when he saw Abū Sufyān repenting his retreat from Madīnah and all too resolved to go back and fight, he told Abū Sufyān: 'You are making a mistake by thinking that Muslim forces have become weak. I have just passed by a huge army of theirs camped at Ḥamrā' al-Asad. Armed with an array of men and materials, they are about to set out in hot pursuit against you.' This report from him put the awe of Muslim forces in his heart.

This event has been related in three verses (172-174) given above. It has been said in the first verse (172) that despite injuries and hardships from the Battle of Uḥud, when Allah and His Messenger called them up for another *Jihād*, they were ready for that too. Worth noticing at this point is the fact that the Muslims being praised here had two distinguishing features. The first one appears in مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَآ اَصَابَهُمُ الْقَرْحُ (even after they had received the wound) which means that those

who responded to the call of Allah and His Messenger were people wounded at the Battle of Badr. Seventy of their brave companions had met their martyrdom on the battlefield while they themselves were riddled with injuries all over their bodies, yet when they were called to serve again, they immediately agreed to join the *Jihād*.

The second distinctive feature has been mentioned in the words: لِلَّذِينَ أَحْسَنُوا مِنْهُمْ وَاتَّقَوْا (for them who did good and feared Allah) which established that these people were not simply some great achievers on the battlefield striving incessantly and staking their lives for a noble cause, but they also imbibed in their person the highest virtues of *Iḥsān* (righteous conduct) and *Taqwā* (fear of Allah). Thus, this very blessed combination of virtues is the cause of their great reward.

Removing a doubt

Let there be no doubt about the word: مِنْهُمْ (literally 'of them') used here. It should not be taken to mean that all these people were not armed with the virtues of *Iḥsān* and *Taqwā* - only some of them were. The simple reason is that the preposition مِنْ : *min* (of, some of) used here is not divisive or partitive. It is, rather, doubtlessly narrative which is confirmed by the very opening words of this very verse: اَلَّذِينَ اسْتَجَابُوا (Those who responded to the call). From this, it is clear that such response and submission simply cannot materialize without having the qualities of *Iḥsān* and *Taqwā* ingrained in one's personality. That is why most commentators have declared that the preposition مِنْ : *min* (of, some of) has been used here in the narrative sense. In short, the essential meaning of the verse is that all these people had rewards waiting for them.

Striving to achieve something good even at the cost of one's life is not enough unless there is total sincerity behind it

Anyway, this particular mode of address leads us to an essential rule of conduct which is: No matter how good is an effort made and no matter how many sacrifices of wealth and life one makes to achieve that end, it can be reward-worthy in the sight of Allah only when it is simultaneously backed by *Iḥsān* and *Taqwā*. Therefore, the essence of the observation is that the deed undertaken must be for the good pleasure of Allah alone. Otherwise simple feats of bravery, some of which come even at the cost of one's dear life, are just about no lesser

among disbelievers as well.

In its ultimate reality, the command of the Messenger of Allah is the command of Allah.

In this event, it will be recalled that the command to pursue the disbelievers was given by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم . This does not find mention in any verse of the Holy Qur'ān. But, in this particular verse, when the obedience of those people is praised, the command was attributed to both Allah and His Messenger as evident from the words of the text: اَلَّذِيْنَ اسْتَجَابُوْا لِلّٰهِ وَالرَّسُوْلِ (172): 'Those who responded to the call of Allah and the Messenger.' This proves very clearly that the command which the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم gives is also the command of Allah even though it has not been mentioned in the Book of Allah.

As for those irreligious deviants who reject *Ḥadīth* and belittle the status of the Messenger of Allah by restricting it to that of a courier (God forbid), a simple statement, that Allah Almighty has openly declared the command of the Messenger as His own, should be enough to understand the truth - if understanding is what they seek. This statement, moreover, also makes it clear that the Messenger can, also by himself and at his discretion, set up rules in accordance with expedient considerations, and all such rules have the same status as that enjoyed by the commandments of Allah.

The Definition of *Iḥsān*

Mentioned several times during the comments given above, the word *Iḥsān* generally means the performance of good deeds with the best of effort and discretion. However, the basic definition of *Iḥsān* was given by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم himself as reported in the well-known '*ḥadīth* of Jibra'īl'. The actual words are:

اَنْ تَعْبُدَاللّٰهَ كَاَنَّكَ تَرَاهُ فَاِنْ لَمْ تَكُنْ تَرَاهُ فَاِنَّهٗ يَرَاكَ

> That is, worship Allah as if you are seeing Him; and if it is not possible for you to (imagine that you) see Him, then, (imagine that) He sees you anyway.

The Definition of *Taqwā*

The word, *Taqwā*, has been interpreted variously but the most comprehensive definition is what was given by the blessed Companion 'Ubayy ibn Ka'b رضى الله عنه when Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنه asked him as

to what *Taqwā* really was. Sayyidnā Ubayy ibn Ka'b said: 'O Commander of the Faithful, you may have certainly passed by pathways full of thorns, have you not?' Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنه said, 'Several times, of course.' Sayyidnā Ubayy ibn Ka'b رضى الله عنه asked, 'What did you do at that time?' Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنه said, 'I folded the hang of my dress and walked carefully.' Sayyidnā Ubayy ibn Ka'b said, 'Enough. You said it. This is what *Taqwā* means. This mortal world of ours is a bed of thorns, full of the thorns of sins, therefore, one should live in this world in a way that one does not get entangled in the thorns of sin. The name of this attitude to life is *Taqwā,* the highest capital gain one can dream of.' The blessed Companion, Sayyidnā Abū al-Dardā' رضى الله عنه used to recite the following verse quite often:

يَقُولُ الْمَرْءُ فَائِدَتِي وَمَالِي ، وَتَقْوَى اللهِ أَفْضَلُ مَا اسْتَفَادَا

"People say, 'my gain' and 'my money' while, really, the fear of Allah (*Taqwā*) is the best of what is gained."

In the second verse (173), more praises have been showered on the noble Companions, may Allah be pleased with them all, who so courageously stepped forward to join this *Jihād*. The words of the verse are:

اَلَّذِيْنَ قَالَ لَهُمُ النَّاسُ اِنَّ النَّاسَ قَدْ جَمَعُوْالَكُمْ فَاخْشَوْهُمْ، فَزَادَهُمْ اِيْمَانًا

--- those to whom people said, "The people have gathered against you; so, fear them." It increased them in Faith ...

That is, blessed are such people who heard the news that the enemy has assembled a big fighting force against them and also the advice that they should fear them and avoid fighting - still, this news further increased the fervour of their faith. The reason is simple: When these blessed people had agreed to obey Allah and His Messenger, they had realized right from day one that the path they have chosen to travel on is full of dangers. There will be difficulties and impediments at every step. Their passage will not be easy. They will be stopped. Even armed efforts will be made to suppress their revolutionary movement. Thus, when these noble people came across such hardships, the power of their Faith increased to levels higher than before and, as a result, they worked harder, more selflessly, more than ever.

As obvious, the Faith of these noble souls was perfect from the very first day they had embraced Islam, therefore, the reference to the increase in Faith in these two verses (172-173) means the increase in the qualitative contents and end-results of Faith. Even this state of the Companions who readily responded to the call of Allah and His Messenger has been specially mentioned at this point by saying that they kept reciting: حَسْبُنَا اللّٰهُ وَنِعْمَ الْوَكِيْلُ (173) all along their march to the *Jihād* mission. The sentence means: Allah is all-sufficient for us and the best one to trust in.

Let us consider an important rule of conduct at this point. It is a fact and we know it too well that no one in this world can claim to have placed his trust in Allah, a degree more pronounced than the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and his noble Companions. But, the form and manner of such trust was different. He would never think of sitting back forsaking all physical means available and end up saying: Allah is all-sufficient for us - He will bless us with victory while we sit out and do nothing! No. This did not work like that. Instead, he gathered the noble Companions together, infused a new fighting spirit in the hearts of those injured, prepared them for the *Jihād*, both materially and spiritually before marching out. It means that he collected and used all physical means which were available to him and it was only after that he said: 'Allah is all-sufficient for us.' This, then, is the most authentic form of *Tawakkul* (Trust in Allah) taught by the Holy Qur'ān, personally practiced by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and this was what he made others around him do. All physical means which we have in the life of this world are blessings from Allah. Rejecting or abandoning them amounts to being ungrateful to Him. Placing trust in Allah after having forsaken available physical means is no Sunnah (established practice) of the Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم. However, if there be someone comprehensively overwhelmed by his state of being, he could be deemed as excusable while being unable to observe this precept of the Sharī'ah. Otherwise, the most sound practice is no more than what has been curtly expressed in a Persian poetic line:

برتوکل زانوے اشتربه بند

Before placing trust, do tie your camel.

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has himself stated the meaning of

this very verse: حَسْبُنَا اللّٰهُ وَنِعْمَ الْوَكِيْلُ (173) 'Allah is all-sufficient for us, and the best one to trust in,' while deciding a case reported in *Ḥadīth* :

As reported by Sayyidnā 'Awf ibn Mālik رضى الله عنه , a case involving two men came up for hearing before the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم . He gave his verdict. The man who lost the case heard the verdict in perfect peace and started walking out with the words: حَسْبِىَ اللّٰهُ وَنِعْمَ الْوَكِيْلُ (Allah is all-sufficient for me, and the best one to trust in) on his lips. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم asked: 'Bring this man to me.' He said to him:

إِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَلُوْمُ عَلَى الْعِجْزِ وَلٰكِنْ عَلَيْكَ بِالْكَيْسِ فَإِذَا غَلَبَكَ أَمْرٌ فَقُلْ حَسْبِىَ اللّٰهُ وَ نِعْمَ الْوَكِيْلُ

> Allah censures inaction but it is your duty to use means, following which, when you find yourself powerless against odds, then say: 'Allah is all-sufficient for me, and the best one to trust in.'

The third verse (174) recounts the blessings which descended upon these noble Companions for their brave response to the call of *Jihād* and for saying: حَسْبُنَا اللّٰهُ وَنِعْمَ الْوَكِيْلُ (Allah is all-sufficient for us, and the best one to trust in). It was said:

فَانْقَلَبُوْا بِنِعْمَةٍ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَفَضْلٍ لَّمْ يَمْسَسْهُمْ سُوْٓءٌ وَّاتَّبَعُوْا رِضْوَانَ اللّٰهِ

> So, they returned with bounty from Allah, and grace, with no evil having even touched them -- and submitted to the pleasure of Allah.

Allah Almighty bestowed on them three blessings:

1. Such awe and terror was placed in the hearts of disbelievers that they ran away because of which the Companions remained protected against the rigours of fighting on the battlefield. Allah Almighty has used the very word *Ni'mah* for what we refer to as blessing.

2. The second blessing conferred on them was the opportunity to engage in trading in the market of Ḥamrā' al-Asad. The benefits yielded by such financial transactions were called '*Faḍl*' or the bounty from Allah.

3. The third and the highest of the three blessings was the attainment of the pleasure of Allah which these blessed souls received in

this *Jihād* in a special manner.

حَسْبُنَا اللّٰهُ وَنِعْمَ الْوَكِيْلُ : *Hasbunallāhu wa ni'mal-wakīl*: A wonderful prayer for all of us

The blessings of this prayer cited by the Holy Qur'ān were not limited to the Companions of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in any restrictive sense. The fact is that anyone who recites this prayer devotedly with a genuine sense of faith will share in such blessings.

Muslim scholars and spiritual masters have said that one who recites this verse a thousand times with true faith, and prays, will find that Allah Almighty has not rejected his prayer. Reciting this verse under the stress of frustrations and difficulties is a proven panacea.

The fourth verse (175) tells Muslims that the real agent behind the report that the disbelievers are coming back is Satan himself who would love to see Muslims overawed. In other words, Satan is threatening Muslims with the strength of his friends - his cohorts, the disbelievers. Thus, one of the two objects of the verb يُخَوِّفُ : *yukhawwifu* [frightens (you)] has been left out in the text. The one mentioned is in '*auliyā'ahū*' (of his friends) while the one understood but not mentioned is 'you' as it would be in يُخَوِّفُكُمْ : *yukhawwifukum* (frightens you).

In the end, the verse exhorts Muslims not to fear such threats. What is necessary is that Muslims must continue fearing Allah, the natural outcome of which will be that a true Muslim will always think twice before embarking on anything that means disobedience to Allah. The truth of the matter is that, with Allah's help and support on ones' side, no harm can come from any side.

The Fear of Allah: What does it mean?

The imperative in the present verse obligates Muslims that they must always keep fearing Allah. In another verse, يَخَافُوْنَ رَبَّهُمْ مِّنْ فَوْقِهِمْ (They fear their Lord above them-16:50) those who do so have been praised. Some revered elders have explained it by saying that fearing Allah does not mean that one should be scared stiff or sit back in tears. Far from it, a God-fearing person is one who leaves everything which may become a source of Allah's displeasure or punishment.

Abū 'Alī al-Daqqāq, may Allāh's mercy be upon him, says that Abū

Bakr ibn al-Fuwarrak was sick so he paid him a visit. When Abū Bakr saw him, he was in tears. Abū 'Alī consoled him by saying that there was nothing to worry about, Allah Almighty will give him health soon enough. Abū Bakr corrected Abū 'Alī's impression and said that he was certainly not weeping because of any fear of death. What he really worried about was his fate after death lest he may be awarded some punishment then. (Qurṭubī)

Verses 176 - 178

وَلَا يَحْزُنْكَ الَّذِينَ يُسَارِعُونَ فِي الْكُفْرِ ۚ إِنَّهُمْ لَنْ يَضُرُّوا اللَّهَ
شَيْئًا ۗ يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ أَلَّا يَجْعَلَ لَهُمْ حَظًّا فِي الْآخِرَةِ ۖ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ
عَظِيمٌ ﴿١٧٦﴾ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ اشْتَرَوُا الْكُفْرَ بِالْإِيمَانِ لَنْ يَضُرُّوا
اللَّهَ شَيْئًا ۚ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿١٧٧﴾ وَلَا يَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا
أَنَّمَا نُمْلِي لَهُمْ خَيْرٌ لِأَنْفُسِهِمْ ۚ إِنَّمَا نُمْلِي لَهُمْ لِيَزْدَادُوا إِثْمًا ۚ
وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مُهِينٌ ﴿١٧٨﴾

Those who hasten towards disbelief should not make you grieve. They cannot harm Allah at all. Allah intends not to spare for them any share in the Hereafter. And for them there is a mighty punishment. [176] **Certainly, those who bought disbelief in exchange of Belief cannot harm Allah at all. And for them there is a painful punishment.** [177] **And those who disbelieve should not think that the time We give them is good for them. In fact, We give them time only that they may increase in sin. And for them there is a humiliating punishment.** [178]

Previous verses mentioned the treachery and ill-will of the hypocrites. The present verses comfort the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, asking him not to grieve over the mischiefs made by the disbelievers for they cannot harm him in any way.

The last verse (178) carries a refutation of the false notion about disbelievers: How can they, while obviously prospering in the present world, be regarded as victims of Allah's wrath and rejection?

Commentary

Material affluence of disbelievers is, after all, an extension of Divine punishment

Let there be no doubt about the worldly well-being of disbelievers for one may be tempted to believe that since Allah Almighty has given respite, long life, security and comfort to disbelievers so that they go on increasing in their crimes, they should, then, be taken as innocent. Far from it, because the verse means that Muslims should not feel upset about this temporary respite and affluence given to disbelievers as all this worldly wealth and power in their hands - despite their disbelief and disobedience - is nothing but a form of the very punishment destined for them. Today, they do not realize it. But, once they leave the mortal world, they would. They would discover to their dismay that all those articles of comfort they acquired and spent in sin were, in reality, the very embers of Hell. This is corroborated by several other verses of the Qur'ān. For instance, in إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللّٰهُ لِيُعَذِّبَهُمْ بِهَا (Allah intends to punish them with it - 9:55) which means that the wealth and power of disbelievers and their vulgarly luxurious consumerism should not be a matter of pride for them for this is nothing but an instalment of that very punishment from Allah which will cause their punishment in the Hereafter to increase.

Verse 179

مَا كَانَ اللّٰهُ لِيَذَرَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ عَلٰى مَآ اَنْتُمْ عَلَيْهِ حَتّٰى يَمِيْزَ
الْخَبِيْثَ مِنَ الطَّيِّبِ ؕ وَمَا كَانَ اللّٰهُ لِيُطْلِعَكُمْ عَلَى الْغَيْبِ
وَلٰكِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَجْتَبِيْ مِنْ رُّسُلِهٖ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ ۪ فَاٰمِنُوْا بِاللّٰهِ
وَرُسُلِهٖ ۚ وَاِنْ تُؤْمِنُوْا وَتَتَّقُوْا فَلَكُمْ اَجْرٌ عَظِيْمٌ ﴿١٧٩﴾

Allah is not to leave the believers in what you are in unless He separates the impure from the pure. And Allah is not to inform you of the unseen. But Allah selects from His messengers whom He wills. So, believe in Allah and His messengers. And if you believe, and fear Allah, then, for you there is a great reward. [179]

The previous verse (178) answered the question about disbelievers as to why they, being the detested ones in the sight of Allah, are in possession of all sort of wealth, property and other means of luxurious

living?

The present verse (179), in sharp contrast, removes the doubt about true believers as to why they, being the favoured servants of Allah, are tested with all sorts of hardships? Being favoured required that they should have been the ones living in comfort surrounded by its paraphernalia !

Commentary

The wisdom of making a believer distinct from a hypocrite through practical demonstration rather than through a revelation.

It has been said in this verse that Allah Almighty has His way of making a sincere believer distinct from a hypocrite through which He generates such situations of hardship as would expose the hypocrisy of the hypocrites practically. This distinction, though, could also be made by identifying hypocrites by name through a revelation. But, the later course was not taken because it would have not been wise. The whole range of wisdom behind what Allah does is known to Him alone. However, one wise consideration in the present context could be: If Muslims were told about a person being a hypocrite through revelation, they would have had no difficulty in dealing with them carefully, but this would have not provided them with a clearly demonstrated proof necessarily acceptable to the hypocrites - for, they would have still insisted: 'You are wrong. We are true Muslims.'

Contrary to this, the distinction was made practically. The introduction of hardship put the hypocrites to test in which they failed and ran away. Their hypocricy was demonstrated and exposed practically and openly. Now they did not have the cheek to claim that they were true, sincere and believing Muslims.

The manner in which the hypocrites were exposed yielded yet another benefit for Muslims when their formal relationship was also severed with the hypocrites. Otherwise, maintaining a state of discord in the heart with a veneer of formal social dealing would have been equally harmful ethically.

The Unseen when communicated to anyone is no Knowledge of the Unseen as such

This verse tells us that Allah Almighty does not inform everyone

about Unseen matters through the medium of revelation (*Waḥy*). However, He does inform His chosen prophets in this manner. From this, let no one hasten to doubt that prophets too have become sharers in the Knowledge of the Unseen or the knowers of the Unseen! The reason is that the Knowledge of the Unseen which is particularly attributed to the being of Allah Almighty cannot be taken as being shared by any created being. Doing so is *Shirk* (the crime of ascribing partners to Allah). The particular Knowledge is fortified by two conditions:

1. This should be intrinsic to the being, not given by anyone else.

2. This has to be all-comprehensive, encompassing all universes, the past and the future - a Knowledge that covers even the minutest particle without any possibility of anything remaining hidden from it. As for things of the Unseen the information of which is given to His prophets by Allah Almighty through the medium of revelation (*Waḥy*), they are not, really, the Knowledge of the Unseen as such. They are, rather, news of the Unseen given to prophets, something about which the Holy Qur'ān itself has used the expression اَنۢبَآءِ الْغَيْبِ (news or reports of the Unseen) at several places :

مِنْ اَنۢبَآءِ الْغَيْبِ نُوْحِيْهَآ اِلَيْكَ

... a part of the news of the Unseen We reveal to you. (11:49)

Verses 180 - 186

وَلَا يَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِيْنَ يَبْخَلُوْنَ بِمَآ اٰتٰهُمُ اللّٰهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهٖ هُوَ خَيْرًا
لَّهُمْ ؕ بَلْ هُوَ شَرٌّ لَّهُمْ ؕ سَيُطَوَّقُوْنَ مَا بَخِلُوْا بِهٖ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ ؕ وَلِلّٰهِ
مِيْرَاثُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ خَبِيْرٌ ﴿۱۸۰﴾
لَقَدْ سَمِعَ اللّٰهُ قَوْلَ الَّذِيْنَ قَالُوْٓا اِنَّ اللّٰهَ فَقِيْرٌ وَّنَحْنُ اَغْنِيَآءُ
سَنَكْتُبُ مَا قَالُوْا وَقَتْلَهُمُ الْاَنْۢبِيَآءَ بِغَيْرِ حَقٍّ ۙ وَّنَقُوْلُ ذُوْقُوْا
عَذَابَ الْحَرِيْقِ ﴿۱۸۱﴾ ذٰلِكَ بِمَا قَدَّمَتْ اَيْدِيْكُمْ وَاَنَّ اللّٰهَ لَيْسَ
بِظَلَّامٍ لِّلْعَبِيْدِ ﴿۱۸۲﴾ اَلَّذِيْنَ قَالُوْٓا اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَهِدَ اِلَيْنَآ اَلَّا

نُؤْمِنَ لِرَسُولٍ حَتَّىٰ يَأْتِيَنَا بِقُرْبَانٍ تَأْكُلُهُ النَّارُ ۗ قُلْ قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ
رُسُلٌ مِّن قَبْلِي بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ وَبِالَّذِي قُلْتُمْ فَلِمَ قَتَلْتُمُوهُمْ إِن كُنتُمْ
صَادِقِينَ ﴿١٨٣﴾ فَإِن كَذَّبُوكَ فَقَدْ كُذِّبَ رُسُلٌ مِّن قَبْلِكَ جَاءُوا
بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ وَالزُّبُرِ وَالْكِتَابِ الْمُنِيرِ ﴿١٨٤﴾ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ ذَائِقَةُ الْمَوْتِ ۗ
وَإِنَّمَا تُوَفَّوْنَ أُجُورَكُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ ۖ فَمَن زُحْزِحَ عَنِ النَّارِ
وَأُدْخِلَ الْجَنَّةَ فَقَدْ فَازَ ۗ وَمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا مَتَاعُ الْغُرُورِ
﴿١٨٥﴾ لَتُبْلَوُنَّ فِي أَمْوَالِكُمْ وَأَنفُسِكُمْ وَلَتَسْمَعُنَّ مِنَ الَّذِينَ
أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ وَمِنَ الَّذِينَ أَشْرَكُوا أَذًى كَثِيرًا ۚ وَإِن
تَصْبِرُوا وَتَتَّقُوا فَإِنَّ ذَٰلِكَ مِنْ عَزْمِ الْأُمُورِ ﴿١٨٦﴾

And those who are miserly with what Allah has given them out of His grace should not take it as good for them. Instead, it is bad for them. They shall be forced, on the Doomsday, to put on round their necks the shackles of what they were miserly with. And to Allah belongs the inheritance of the heavens and the earth. And of what you do, Allah is All-Aware. [180]

Allah has surely heard the saying of those who said, "Allah is poor and we are rich." We shall write down what they said, and their killing of the prophets unjustly; and We shall say, "Taste the punishment of the flaming fire. [181] **This is due to what your hands sent ahead and that Allah is not cruel to the slaves."** [182]

(There are) those who said, "Surely, Allah directed us that we should not believe in a messenger unless he comes to us with an offering to be eaten up by the fire." Say, "A number of messengers have come to you, before me, with clear signs and with what you have said. So, why did you kill them, if you are true? [183]

Then if they belie you, so messengers have been belied before you. They came with clear signs and the Scriptures and light giving Book. [184]

Every soul has to taste death. And it is on the Doomsday that you shall be paid your rewards in full. So, whoever has been kept away from the Fire and admitted to Paradise, he has really succeeded. And the wordly life is nothing but an asset, full of illusion. [185]

Of course, you shall be tested in your wealth and yourselves. And, of course, you shall hear much of what hurts, from those who have been given the Book before you and from those who associate (others with Allah). And if you observe patience and fear Allah, then these are among matters of determination. [186]

Anomalies in the conduct of Jews were mentioned at the beginning of Sūrah 'Āl-'Imrān (21-25). The text now reverts back to the same subject. The verses cited above carry related topics. In between, there are words of comfort for the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم as well as those giving good counsel to Muslims.

Commentary

The first (180) of the seven verses (180-186) appearing here repudiates miserliness and carries a warning for those who practice it.

The Definition of Miserliness and the punishment it brings

In the terminology of the Sharī'ah of Islam, miserliness (*Bukhl*) refers to the act of not spending that which it is obligatory to spend in the way of Allah. Therefore, miserliness is forbidden (*ḥarām*). Besides, it carries a stern warning of Hell for its practitioners. As for occasions where spending is not obligatory (*wājib*) but only recommended (*mustaḥabb*), then not spending there is not included under the miserliness which is forbidden. However, this too is called miserliness in its general sense. As said earlier, this kind of miserliness is not forbidden (*ḥarām*) but against the preferred choice (*khilāf aulā*) it certainly is.

Appearing in *Ḥadīth*, there is another word - *Shuḥḥ* - also used in the sense of *Bukhl* or miserliness. By definition, it means not spending what it was obligatory to spend - one may go even farther than that by remaining consumed with greed to increase one's wealth. This then, shall be a crime much more severe than ordinary miserliness. Therefore, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said:

لَا يَجْتَمِعُ شُحٌّ وَّ اِيْمَانٌ فِيْ قَلْبِ رَجُلٍ مُّسْلِمٍ اَبَدًا

That is, miserliness (*shuḥḥ*) and faith (*'Īmān*) can never coexist in the heart of a Muslim. (Qurṭubī)

The punishment for miserliness (*Bukhl*) mentioned in this verse: 'They shall be forced, on the Doomsday, to put on round their necks the shackles of what they were miserly with' has been explained by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in the following words reported by Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضى الله عنه :

> 'Anyone Allah blessed with some wealth and who did not pay the *zakāh* due on it properly will find his or her wealth turn into a deadly snake shackled round the neck chomping at the person's mouth from one to the other end of the lips and saying: 'I am your wealth. I am your capital gain.' Thereafter, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم recited this verse (180). (Al-Nasā'ī, from Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī)

The second verse (18) warns Jews against their grave act of effrontery and mentions its punishment. According to the background of the event, when the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم presented the Qur'ānic injunctions relating to *Zakāh* and *Ṣadaqāt* (charities), the arrogant Jews started saying that Allah had surely become poor and needy while they were rich, or else why would He go about asking us to give? We seek refuge with Allah from such effrontery. Obviously, they would have hardly believed in the absurd statement they made but, in all likelihood, they would have said so to prove that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was, God forbid, false in his statement. Their argument was: If these verses of the Qur'ān are true, then, it necessarily follows that Allah be poor and needy! This absurd argument of theirs being false in itself was not worth responding to because the injunction of Allah Almighty was not for His benefit; it was, rather, for the benefit of the owners of wealth themselves in this world and the hereafter. But, it was termed as giving loan to Allah elsewhere because repayment of a loan is necessary and certain in the sight of every good person. Similar is the case of charity given by someone, the repayment of which Allah Almighty takes upon Himself as if it was the payment of loan taken from someone. Anyone who believes in Allah Almighty as the Creator and Master of everything would never stoop to entertain the kind of doubt from these words of the verse which is there in the saying of the insolent Jews. For this reason, the

Qur'ān has certainly refrained from answering this doubt. Instead, it has simply restricted itself to announcing that they shall be apprehended and punished for this effrontery of theirs, for having falsified the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and for having made fun of him. It was said that their insolent words will be put on record in 'writing' so that the final evidence goes against them on the Day of Judgment and they are punished for what they did. Otherwise, Allah Almighty needs no writing.

Along with this act of effrontery committed by the Jews, yet another crime of theirs has been mentioned, that is, they not only falsified the prophets and mocked at them, they even went to the limit of killing them! That such people could falsify and flout any prophet or messenger of Allah hardly remains surprising.

Staying emotionally satisfied with disbelief in and disobedience to Allah is also an equally grave sin

Worth noticing at this point is the fact that those being addressed by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and the Qur'ān are the Jews of Madīnah while the incident of the killing of prophets belongs to a time much earlier than theirs, that is, to the time of Sayyidnā Yaḥyā and Sayyidnā Zakariyyā, may peace be on them. Now, the question is: How is it that the crime of the killing of the prophets referred to in this verse was attributed to these addressees? The reason is: The Jews of Madīnah were quite satisfied with this act committed by their Jewish predecessors, therefore, they too were counted as those who fall under the injunction governing killers of prophets.

Imām al-Qurṭubī has said in his *Tafsīr* that 'remaining satisfied with disbelief (*kufr*) is also included under disbelief and disobedience' which is a major juristic ruling in Islam. A saying of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم explains it further. He said:

> 'When a sin is committed on God's earth, following which, the person who is present on the spot opposes that sin and considers it to be bad, then, such a person shall be deemed as not present there, that is, he is no accomplice in their sin. And, a person who, though not present physically yet is quite satisfied with this act of sinners, then, this person shall be considered, despite his absence (from the scene of sin), an accomplice in their sin.'

In the later part of the present verse (181) and in the third verse (182), the text recounts the punishment to be meted out to such loud-mouthed people by saying that they shall be consigned to the Hell to experience the taste of burning in fire which is but the outcome of their own deeds and certainly no injustice from Allah. The fourth verse (183) takes up the case of a false accusation made by these very Jews who came up with an excuse in order to reject the prophethood of the Messenger of Allah. Their contention was that, during the period of past prophets, there used to be a method under which charities and offerings were placed in the centre of an open ground or on top of a hill where heavenly fire came and burnt these to ashes. This used to symbolize that offerings were accepted. But, to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and to his community, Allah Almighty had given the unique distinction that charities were not left to be consumed by heavenly fire. They were given to the poor and needy among Muslims. Since the later method was contrary to the former, the disbelievers found an excuse to say: If you were a prophet, you too would have been given the miracle whereby the heavenly fire would have consumed the offerings and charities. They, not resting at that, became audacious enough to fabricate lies against Allah Almighty claiming that 'He has taken pledge from them to the effect that they are not to believe in a person who is unable to cause the miracle of the coming of a heavenly fire which burns the charitable offerings.'

Since this claim of the Jews that Allah had taken a pledge from them was false, there was really no need to counter it. So, to disarm them through their very proven saying, Allah Almighty said: If you are true in saying that Allah has taken such a pledge from you, then, the past prophets who had obliged you by showing the miracle of your choice whereby the heavenly fire consumed the offerings certainly deserved that you should have at least believed in them! But, what actually happened is that you did not spare them either. You still falsified them. In fact, you went to the extreme of transgression by killing them.

Let no one have any doubt here despite the fact that while this claim of the Jews was absolutely false, may be, if this miracle did come to pass at the hand of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم chances were that

they would probably have come to believe. Such a doubt is unfounded because Allah Almighty knew that these people were saying such things simply out of hostility and obstinacy. Thus, even if the miracle they demanded came to pass, they would have still not believed.

In the fifth verse (184), the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been comforted by saying that he should not grieve at being falsified by his adversaries for this is something faced by all prophets in the past.

Thoughts of the Hereafter heal all sorrows and remove all doubts

The sixth verse (185) puts a sharp focus on the ultimate reality of things in a situation when sometime somewhere disbelievers come to enjoy ascendency one way or the other and they have all the luxury they can think of in this world. Contrary to this, Muslims have to face some hardships, some difficulties and a certain paucity of worldly means. There is nothing surprising about it and certainly no occasion to be grieved, for no follower of a faith or philosophy can ignore the reality of life that sorrow and happiness in this world are both short-lived. No living creature can escape death. As for the comfort and discomfort experienced in this world, they vanish, more than often, right there with relevant changes in circumstances - or, just in case, no change takes place during the life of this world, it is certain that everything will end with the knock of death. Therefore, worrying about this short-lived cycle of comfort and discomfort should not become the chronic concern of a wise person. One should, rather, have concern for what would happen after death.

So, the verse (185) tells us that every living being shall taste death and once in the Hereafter, there shall come the reward and punishment of deeds which will be severe and long drawn as well. This is what a wise person should worry about and prepare for. Given this rule of conduct, one who stays away from Hell and finds entry into the Paradise is really the successful one. May be this happens at the very beginning as would be the case with the most righteous servants of Allah. Or, it may come to pass after having faced some punishment as would be the case with sinning Muslims. But, Muslims - all of them - will finally have their deliverance from Hell and the blessings of Paradise will become theirs for ever. This will be contrary to what happens

to disbelievers - Hell will be their eternal resting place. If they wax proud over their short-lived worldly gains, they are terribly deceived. That is why it was said at the end of the verse: 'And the worldly life is nothing but an asset, full of illusion.' Strange is the anatomy of this deception, for reckless material enjoyments here become the source of great hardships in the Hereafter and conversely, most of the hardships faced here become the treasure of the Hereafter.

People of Falsehood hurting people of Truth is a natural phenomena: Patience (*Ṣabr*) and piety (*Taqwā*) cure everything

The seventh verse (186) was revealed in the background of a particular event which has been briefly referred to a little earlier in verse 181. According to relevant details, when verse 245 of Sūrah al-Baqarah: مَنْ ذَا الَّذِیْ یُقْرِضُ اللّٰہَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا (who is the one who would give Allah a good loan) was revealed, it eloquently equated the givings of charities to the giving of loan to Allah thereby indicating that all givings in charity in the life of this world will be recompensed with a certainty like that of someone returning a loan taken. An ignorant or hostile Jew reacted by commenting in the following words: إِنَّ اللّٰہَ فَقِیْرٌ وَّ نَحْنُ اَغْنِیَآءُ (Allah is poor and we are rich). Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضی اللہ عنہ was angry at his effrontery and slapped him. The Jew complained to the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم. Thereupon, the verse: لَتُبْلَوُنَّ فِیْٓ اَمْوَالِکُمْ وَاَنْفُسِکُمْ الایۃ (Of course, you shall be tested in your wealth and yourselves) was revealed. This verse instructs Muslims that they should not show weakness when called to stake their wealth and life in the defence of their Faith or when they are hurt by the vituperations of the disbelievers, the polytheists and the people of the Book. All this is nothing but a trial for them. The best course for them is to observe restraint, be patient and keep to their real objective in life which is the achievement of the perfect state of *Taqwā*, (a state in which one fears Allah and remains answerable to Him all the time). In such a state Muslims should not worry about replying to the effrontery by antogonists.

Verses 187 - 189

وَاِذْ اَخَذَ اللّٰہُ مِیْثَاقَ الَّذِیْنَ اُوْتُوا الْکِتٰبَ لَتُبَیِّنُنَّہٗ لِلنَّاسِ وَلَا
تَکْتُمُوْنَہٗ فَنَبَذُوْہُ وَرَآءَ ظُھُوْرِھِمْ وَاشْتَرَوْا بِہٖ ثَمَنًا قَلِیْلًا

فَبِئْسَ مَا يَشْتَرُوْنَ ﴿١٨٧﴾ لَا تَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِيْنَ يَفْرَحُوْنَ بِمَآ اَتَوْا
وَّيُحِبُّوْنَ اَنْ يُّحْمَدُوْا بِمَا لَمْ يَفْعَلُوْا فَلَا تَحْسَبَنَّهُمْ بِمَفَازَةٍ مِّنَ
الْعَذَابِ ۚ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ ﴿١٨٨﴾ وَلِلّٰهِ مُلْكُ السَّمٰوٰتِ
وَالْاَرْضِ ۗ وَاللّٰهُ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ ﴿١٨٩﴾

And when Allah took pledge from those who were given the Book: "You shall make it known to people, and you shall not conceal it." So, they threw it away behind their backs and bought a small price out of it. So, evil is what they buy. [187]

And do not think of those who are delighted with what they did and love to be praised for what they never did - so, do not think of them as being in a position to escape the punishment. And a painful punishment is there for them. [188] **And to Allah belongs the Kingdom of the heavens and the earth. And Allah is powerful over everything.** [189]

In continuation of the description of evils practiced by the Jews mentioned in previous verses, the first of the present two verses (187) takes up yet another evil practice of theirs. This is their habit of going back on solemn pledges and covenants - for Allah Almighty had taken pledge from the people of the Book that they would communicate the commandments of Allah appearing in the Torah freely, openly and universally and that they would not conceal any injunction out of their selfish ends. The people of the Book broke this covenant. They concealed injunctions. Not only that, they were audacious enough to show their pleasure about having acted in this manner and taking this deed of theirs as commendable.

Commentary

Concealing the Knowledge of Faith is forbidden and waiting or manipulating to be praised without practicing it is deplorable

The three verses cited above describe two crimes committed by scholars from the people of the Book along with their subsequent punishment.

As pointed out earlier, they were commanded to tell their people about injunctions revealed in the Book of Allah freely and openly

without any effort to curtail or hold back what was in there. Although, they were explicitly instructed not to hide any commandment, yet they elected to ignore the pledge they had made, out of their worldly considerations and personal greed. They did hide a good many commandments from their people.

Secondly, they had the problem of personally staying aloof from acting righteously while, at the same time, they had no qualms of conscience in wishing to be praised without acting the way they were expected to.

As for the incidence of hiding the commandments of the Torah, it has been reported in Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās. He narrates that the Holy Prophet ﷺ asked the Jews about something mentioned in the Torah. They concealed the truth and told him something contrary to what was said in the Torah - and they left his company all pleased with their exercise in evil congratulating themselves on their deceit. Thereupon, this verse which carries a warning for them was revealed.

As for the other statement -'they love to be praised for what they never did' - it refers to the hypocrites among the Jews who would make excuses at the time of *Jihād*, sit home and celebrate how well they were able to dodge the hardships of *Jihād*. When the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم returned from *Jihād*, they would go to him, take false oaths, offer excuses and, on top of that, they would demand that this act of theirs be praised. (Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī)

The Holy Qur'ān condemns them for both these attitudes. From here, we know that concealing the knowledge of Faith and the injunctions of Allah and His Messenger is forbidden (*Ḥarām*). But, this forbiddance applies to the kind of concealment which was practiced by the Jews for they used to conceal Divine injunctions to promote their own worldly interest and, in this process, they made people pay for it. However, if an injunction is not broadcast publicly due to some expedient religious consideration, such an action would not fall under the purview of this ruling. This problem has been taken up by Imām al-Bukhārī under a separate subject heading supported by relevant *Ḥadīth* narrations. According to him, there are occasions when there is the danger that masses would fall prey to misunderstanding and

disorder by publicising a certain injunction openly. If an injunction is allowed to remain unpublicised on the basis of such a danger, it does not matter.

The rule about doing a good deed is simple. If anyone does a good deed, then looks forward to be praised for it - or, worse still, takes elaborate steps to make this happen - then, despite having done what one did, this act will be deemed blameworthy under the Islamic legal-moral norms. And should one elect not to do that good deed at all, that would, then, be taken as far more blameworthy. As for the natural desire to do something good and thereby earn a fair name, it is not included under the purview of this ruling - unless, of course, if one does not make unusual projections to earn that fair name (Bayān al-Qur'ān).

Verses 190 - 194

إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاخْتِلَافِ الَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ لَاٰيٰتٍ
لِّأُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ ﴿١٩٠﴾ الَّذِينَ يَذْكُرُونَ اللّٰهَ قِيَامًا وَّقُعُودًا وَّ
عَلٰى جُنُوبِهِمْ وَيَتَفَكَّرُونَ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْأَرْضِ رَبَّنَا مَا
خَلَقْتَ هٰذَا بَاطِلًا سُبْحٰنَكَ فَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ ﴿١٩١﴾ رَبَّنَا إِنَّكَ
مَنْ تُدْخِلِ النَّارَ فَقَدْ أَخْزَيْتَهُ، وَمَا لِلظّٰلِمِينَ مِنْ أَنْصَارٍ
﴿١٩٢﴾ رَبَّنَا إِنَّنَا سَمِعْنَا مُنَادِيًا يُّنَادِي لِلْإِيمَانِ أَنْ اٰمِنُوا
بِرَبِّكُمْ فَاٰمَنَّا رَبَّنَا فَاغْفِرْ لَنَا ذُنُوبَنَا وَكَفِّرْ عَنَّا سَيِّاٰتِنَا وَتَوَفَّنَا
مَعَ الْأَبْرَارِ ﴿١٩٣﴾ رَبَّنَا وَاٰتِنَا مَا وَعَدْتَّنَا عَلٰى رُسُلِكَ وَ
لَا تُخْزِنَا يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ، إِنَّكَ لَا تُخْلِفُ الْمِيعَادَ ﴿١٩٤﴾

Surely, in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and in the alternation of night and day, there are signs for the people of wisdom, [190] **who remember Allah standing and sitting, and (lying) on their sides, and ponder on the creation of the heavens and the earth (saying:) "Our Lord, You have not created all this in vain. We proclaim Your purity. So, save us from the punishment of Fire.** [191] **Our Lord, whomsoever You**

admit into the Fire, You have disgraced him indeed. And for the unjust there are no supporters. Our Lord, We heard a herald calling towards Faith: 'Believe in your Lord.' And We believed. [192] **Our Lord, forgive us, then, our sins, and write off our evil deeds, and take us unto You with the righteous.** [193] **And our Lord, give us what You have promised us through Your messengers, and do not put us to disgrace on the Day of Doom. Surely you do not got back on Your promise."** [194]

Verse 189 appearing immediately earlier particularly and strongly stressed upon *Tauḥīd*, the Oneness of Allah. So, the verse (190) which follows here, presents the proof of *Tauḥīd* and, along with it, mentions the merit of those who act strictly in accordance with the dictates of *Tauḥīd* and, by implication, it also motivates others to do the same.

In addition, the earlier mention of pain caused by the disbelievers bears congruity to the verses appearing presently. This can be understood in the background in which the disbelievers, out of hostility, requested the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم that he should turn Mount Ṣafā into solid gold. Thereupon, this verse was revealed indicating that there were so many proofs confirming the Truth all around them - why would they not deliberate in them?

As for the reality of their request to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, it was not motivated to find out the Truth. Instead, it was out of hostility - so, they would have still not believed, even if their request was granted.

Commentary

The background of Revelation

Commenting on the background of revelation concerning these verses, Ibn Ḥibbān in his Ṣaḥīḥ and Ibn 'Asākir in his History have reported that the Companion 'Aṭā ibn Abī Rabāḥ رضى الله عنه went to Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها and said to her: 'Of the things about the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, tell me what you saw as most unique out of the many states of his life.' Thereupon, Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah said: 'Which state are you talking about? In reality, everything about him was unique. Yet, I would tell you about one very unique event. It so happened that the noble Prophet, may Allah bless and protect him, came to me one night and entered into the comforter with me. Then,

he said: 'Allow me to worship my Lord.' He rose from the bed, made *Wuḍū* and stood up for *Ṣalāh*. And in this standing position of *Qiyām*, he wept, so much so that his tears trickled down his blessed chest. Then, he bent down for *Rukū'* and there too he wept. Then he did his *Sajdah* and kept weeping in the *Sajdah* very much like before. Then, he raised his head and continued weeping until came the morning. Sayyidnā Bilāl came in and informed him about the time of the *Fajr Ṣalāh*. Sayyidnā Bilāl says: I submitted: 'my master, why do you weep like that? Is'nt it that Allah Almighty has forgiven you all your past and future sins?' He said: 'So then, should I not continue to be a grateful servant of Allah? And in offering this gratitude of mine, why should I not shed tears, specially tonight when Allah Almighty has revealed this blessed verse to me :

إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ...

Surely, in the creation of the heavens and the earth... (190)

After that, he said: "Ruined is the person who recited these verses but failed to deliberate therein."

So, in order to deliberate into this verse, let us begin by answering some questions first.

What does 'the creation of the heavens and the earth' mean?

Since *Khalq* is a verbal noun which signifies creation or origination, it means that there are, in the creation of the heavens and the earth, great signs of Allah Almighty. Therefore, all those Divinely created beings and things in the heavens and the earth also get to be included therein. Then, among these created beings there are kingdoms after kingdoms - each having different types and states - yet each and every such created being is comprehensively pointing out to its Creator. Then, going a little deeper, one would discover that 'the heavens' is inclusive of all heights and 'the earth' covers all lows. Thus, high or low, all dimensions owe their existence to Allah Almighty.

The different forms of 'the alternation of the night and day'

Let us now determine the meaning of 'the alternation of the night and day'. The word '*Ikhtilāf*' translated here as 'alternation' is derived from the Arabic usage: اختلف فلان فلانا (Such and such person arrived after

such and such person). So, the Arabic expression translated as 'the alternation of the night and day' means that the night goes and the day comes and when the day goes, night comes.

The word *Ikhtilāf* translated here as 'alternation' could also be taken to mean increase or decrease. For example, during winter, the night is long and the day is short; while during the summer, the order is reversed. Similarly, the difference between the night and day is also caused by the difference in the geographical location of countries. For example, countries closer to the North Pole have longer days as compared to areas farther away from it. So, it should not be difficult to infer from each such phenomena the essential proof of the most perfect power of Allah Almighty.

What is the meaning of the word, *Āyāt* ?

Āyāt (آيات) is the plural of *Āyah* (آية) and is used to express more than one single meaning. Miracles are known as *Āyāt*. It is also applied to the verses of the Holy Qur'ān. It is also used in a third sense, that of proof and sign. Here, in the present context, this very third sense is what is intended - meaning that, in these manifestations, there are great signs of Allah, and the proofs of His power.

Wise are those who believe in Allah and always remember Him

To determine the meaning of the expression اولى الالباب, we look into the word '*albāb*' which is the plural of *lubb*. Lexically, it means the essence. Since the essence of everything is its sum-total and the key to its nature and uses, therefore, human wisdom has been called *lubb*, for wisdom is the essence of human nature. Thus, '*albāb*' means 'the people of wisdom'.

Now the problem before us is how to identify the people of wisdom because the whole world claims to be wise. Not even a moron would be ready to admit being devoid of wisdom, reason or sense. Therefore, the Holy Qur'ān has told us about some signs which are, in fact, the most sound criterion of wisdom. The first such sign is Faith in Allah. Think of the knowledge which comes from the senses such as hearing, seeing, smelling and tasting and communication, something also found in non-rational animals. Now, it is the job of wisdom or reason to arrive, through signs, circumstantial evidence and proofs, at a particular conclusion which is beyond sense-perception and through which it may

become possible to grasp the final link of the chain of causes.

Keeping this rule in view, just think about this universe around us. It should not be too difficult to realize that this wonderfully organised system - comprising the heavens and the earth and containing the whole of creation in between them which is further streamlined by the most deft management of everything, big or small, existing therein - certainly points out to a special Being that has to be the highest and the foremost in terms of Knowledge, Wisdom, Power and Authority. A Being who originated and fashioned all these components with the wisest of consideration and under Whose intention and will this whole system keeps operating. That Being, as obvious, can only be that of the most-exalted Allah. How well some spiritual master has put it in a few words:

ہر گیا ھے کہ از زمین روید ، وحدہ لا شریك له گوید

Every blade of grass sprouting from the earth
Says: He is One; there are no partners in Him.

That human intentions and plans keep failing everywhere all the time is a matter of common experience. These cannot be called the prime movers and operators of this universal system. Therefore, the outcome of the deliberation into the creation of the heavens and the earth and into what has been created in them is, as wisdom dictates, living to know, obey and remember Allah. Anyone unmindful of it does not deserve to be classed as wise. Therefore, the Holy Qur'ān has given the following sign of the wise:

اَلَّذِيْنَ يَذْكُرُوْنَ اللّٰهَ قِيَامًا وَّقُعُوْدًا وَّعَلٰى جُنُوْبِهِمْ

That is, the wise are those who remember Allah - standing and sitting and (lying) on their sides (191).

In other words it means that they are engaged in the remembrance of Allah under all conditions and at all times.

From here we find out that the thing which our modern world takes as the criterion of reason and good sense is simply a deception. Catering to greed, some people take accumulation of money as their ideal of intelligence. There are others who love to equate human intelligence with scientific inventions and electronic applications and for them, these are the power. But, real good sense lies in the message

brought by the prophets and Messengers of Allah Almighty, for they, proceeding through knowledge and wisdom and advancing from the low to the high in the chain of causation, skipped the intermediary stages. Granted that human beings moved from raw materials to machines and science gave them access to power through utilization of energy generated in many ways. But, higher intelligence demands that human beings take that real giant step farther ahead so that they can discover that the main agent of human accomplishment is certainly not the water or clay or iron or copper or some other material, not even the machines that generate power. This function was accomplished by none else but the One who created the fire, the water and the air through which human beings were enabled to control technology and energy:

کار زلفِ تست مشك افشانی اما عاشقاں
مصلحت راتہمتے بر آ ھُوئے چین بستہ اند

Spreading the scent of musk is the function of Your tresses
But, those who love You have, out of expediency,
ascribed the credit to the Chinese deer!

Let us understand this through the commonplace example of an ignorant dweller of some distant jungle who reaches a railway station and notices that such a huge railway train stops at the flash of a red flag while it starts moving at the flutter of a green one. Then, should he say that these red and green flags must have super power as they can stop and move such a powerful engine of the big train. Obviously, all sensible people would dismiss the ignoramus telling him that no power is vested in these flags. Instead, power rests with the person who is sitting in the engine room and stops or moves the train by watching these signals. But, someone smarter might reject the assumption that the engine driver had any instrinsic power to move or stop the train. His strength had nothing to do with it. He will go a step farther and attribute this power to the mechanical parts of the engine. But, a scientist would bypass cold mechanics of the engine and ascribe the real power to the steam which has been generated in the engine through heat and water. But, that is as far as the so-called scientific thinking goes. At this point, comes the thinking of the prophets, may peace be upon them, who would be telling these tyrants of their intel-

lect: If the ignoramus who took the flags or the driver or the engine parts as the respository of power was in error, so are those who take sources of energy powerful by themselves - intellectually, they too are in error! The prophets would ask them to take yet another step forward so that they could lay their hands on the lost end of this tangled ball of string. May be, by doing so, they could have access to the final link of the great chain of caused things and there they could find the answer that the ultimate master of all power is none else but the One who created all forces which were harnessed to achieve human models of power.

It is not difficult to deduce from what has been said here that those who get to know Allah and remember Him at all times and under all conditions are the only people who deserve to be called 'the wise'. It is for this reason that the Holy Qur'ān has defined the 'People of Wisdom' as اَلَّذِيْنَ يَذْكُرُوْنَ اللّٰهَ قِيَامًا وَّقُعُوْدًا وَّعَلٰى جُنُوْبِهِمْ : '... those who remember Allah standing and sitting, and (lying) on their sides.'

It is on this basis that Muslim jurists have answered the case of a deceased person who, before his death, made a will that his property be given to the wise. As to who will be given this property, they have ruled that those who will deserve this are abstaining scholars who do not seek unnecessary material resources and are averse to the blind pursuit of the worldly, for they are the wise ones in the real sense. (al-Durr al-Mukhtār, Kitābul-Waṣiyyah)

Also worth attention at this point is the fact that the Sharī'ah of Islam has not enjoined abundance in any other mode of worship except *Dhikr*. But, about *Dhikr*, the command is: وَاذْكُرُوا اللّٰهَ ذِكْرًا كَثِيْرًا (Remember Allah remembering abundantly). The reason is that all modes of worship, other than *Dhikr*, have some conditions and rules without observing which those acts of worship are not considered to have been duly performed. This is contrary to *Dhikr* which can be performed at all times and under all conditions whether standing, sitting, lying, with or without *wuḍū*. Perhaps, this verse is indicative of this element of wisdom.

The second sign of the people of wisdom given in this verse is that they deliberate in the creation of the heavens and the earth:

يَتَفَكَّرُوْنَ فِيْ خَلْقِ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ

And ponder on the creation of the heavens and the earth - 191.

Here we need to determine the meaning of this act of 'pondering' and the level at which it operates.

The Arabic words, *Fikr* and *Tafakkur*, literally mean to ponder, to deliberate and think about something which is an effort to arrive at its reality. From this verse we find out that this act of pondering is also an act of worship and very much like the *Dhikr* (Remembrance) of Allah. The difference is that the objective of *Dhikr* is the remembrance of the Being and Attributes of Almighty Allah while the objective of *Fikr* and *Tafakkur* or thinking and deliberation relates to His creations. This is because the perception of the reality of the Divine Being and the Attributes is beyond human reason. Deliberation of this aspect results in nothing but wonder. The great poet, Rumi said:

دور بینان بارگاہِ الست ، غیر ازیں پے نبردہ اندکہ ہست

Expert watchers of the Court of the Being of the Covenant
Found out nothing but that He is.

In fact, this is an area of inquiry where excessive deliberation in the Being and Attributes of Almighty Allah could, at times, cause one's imperfect reason to stray into error. Therefore, the greatest among spiritual masters have emphatically advised:

تَفَكَّرُوْا فِيْ اٰيَاتِ اللّٰهِ وَلَا تَتَفَكَّرُوْا فِي اللّٰهِ

Deliberate in the signs of Allah, but do not deliberate in Allah.

It means that there are signs in what Allah has created. One should think about these signs. But, one should not deliberate into the very Being and Attributes of Almighty Allah for that is beyond one's reach. One can see everything in the light of the sun. But, should one wish to see the sun itself, his eyes would get dazzled. Who is Allah? What is He like? These are questions all wise thinkers and spiritual masters have answered by suggesting :

نہ ہر جائے مرکب تواں تاختن
کہ جاہا سپر باید انداختن

You do not have to mount an assault on every field of inquiry
For, there are places where you should simply surrender.

However, thinking about creation inevitably leads one to realize the presence of its Creator. Look at the enormous expanse of the sky above us with the sun, the moon and the many planets and stars bound with the solar and lunar system under firm and pre-determined laws working so well for thousands of years without being serviced or refurbished in some workshop. Then, there is this earth of ours, its rivers and mountains holding many marvels of creation, the trees, animals and hidden minerals, and the air that circulates in between the heavens and the earth and the rains that come and the electricity generated therein. This whole system so elaborately set up leads every sane person who is willing to think and understand that there is some special Being which is far ahead of everyone in power and control. This is what *Ma'rifat* is, the stage of knowing, realizing. So, this kind of deliberation which leads to the discovery of the Divine is an act of worship, a great one indeed. For this reason, Ḥaḍrat Ḥasan Baṣrī said: تفكر ساعة خير من قيام ليلة (Ibn Kathīr) which means: An hour spent in thinking about the signs of Allah is better and far more useful than a whole night standing in worship.

Ḥaḍrat 'Umar ibn 'Abdul-'Azīz has characterized this deliberation as a superior act of worship (Ibn Kathīr).

Sayyidnā Ḥasan ibn 'Āmir رضی اللہ عنہ said that he had heard from many noble Companions that deliberation is the light of faith.

Ḥaḍrat Abū Sulaymān al-Dārānī said: When I go out from my house, everything I cast my glance on makes me realize that it contains one or the other blessing of Allah for me and that in its presence I have a good source of learning my lesson (Ibn Kathīr). So, the knowers of the secrets of the self have always maintained:

Every blade of grass sprouting from the earth
Says: He is One and in Him there is no partner.

Ḥaḍrat Sufyān ibn 'Uyaynah has said: Reflection is a beam of light entering your heart.

Hadrat Wahb ibn Munabbih said: One who thinks a lot will understand reality, and who understands will arrive at sound knowledge, and who has sound knowledge is bound to act accordingly (Ibn Kathīr).

Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ said: A pious man saw an ascetic sitting at a spot with a graveyard on one of his sides and a garbage dump on the other. The passing pious man remarked - You have two treasure troves before you, one of them is the human treasure known as graveyard and the other is the treasure of wealth and property turned into refuse and filth. These two treasures are enough to learn your lesson. (Ibn Kathīr)

Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ used to go out of the city into some wilderness with the express purpose of training and teaching his heart. When he reached there, he would ask the spot of land: Where are those who lived here? (این اهلك؟) After that, he would answer his own question by saying: Everything must perish save the presence of His being (كُلُّ شَيْءٍ هَالِكٌ إِلَّا وَجْهَهُ). (Ibn Kathīr). This was how he summoned and preserved the remembrance of Afterlife in his heart.

Ḥaḍrat Bishr al-Ḥāfī said: If people pondered over the greatness of Almighty Allah, it would have become impossible for them to remain sinful and disobedient.

Sayyidnā 'Īsā علیہ السلام said: O you who were created weak, fear God wherever you are. Live in the world like a guest. Make prayer places your home. Let your eyes weep fearing God, let your body remain patient and let your heart keep reflecting. Used to this, worry not about tomorrow's bread.

It is this kind of thoughtfulness and concern that these verses identify as the superior quality of wise people. Pondering over the creation of Almighty Allah, such people get to know their Creator and are personally convinced of the temporality of the physical world. This is a superb act of worship resplendent with the light of faith. Similarly, those who see and experience the signs of Almighty Allah yet get entangled with the superficial glamour of what has been created - as a result of which they fail to know their real master - is rank heedlessness and very much juvenile. Sages have warned that whoever fails to learn a lesson from the universe before his eyes will find that the ability of his heart to realize the truth has corroded in proportion to his heedlessness. The eager protagonists of scientific progress all too engrossed in their breakthroughs fail to pay heed to their own ultimate fate. Consequently, the speed with which developments in scien-

tific inquiry unfold the secrets of Allah's creation is also the speed at which they are receding farther away from reality and God. Commenting on the post-industrial revolution thinking, Akbar of Allahabad, poet, humourist, said:

بھول کر بیٹھا ھے یورپ آسمانی باپ کو

بس خدا سمجھا ھے اس نے برق کو اور بھاپ کو

Europe has forgotten the Father in the Heaven
For them, electricity and steam are as good as God.

It is about such visionless people with the dead weight of education and culture on their backs, the Holy Qur'ān says:

وَكَأَيِّنْ مِّنْ اٰيَةٍ فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ يَمُرُّوْنَ عَلَيْهَا وَهُمْ عَنْهَا مُعْرِضُوْنَ

And there are so many signs in the heavens and the earth which these people pass by with faces turned askance paying no heed to them - 12:109.

Now, as we move to the last part of this verse (191), رَبَّنَا مَا خَلَقْتَ هٰذَا بَاطِلًا (Our Lord, You have not created all this in vain), we can clearly see that this is the outcome of pondering over the signs of Allah's power. It means that there is nothing purposeless in Allah's creation. On the contrary, there are thousands of wise considerations behind it. Things have been harnessed to serve human beings with man being the user of resources in the whole universe. This should make human beings see that the universe has been created for their benefit and in their interest. Likewise, every human being has been created to obey and worship Allah. This is his or her purpose of life.

Further on, from verses 192 to 194, there appears a set of pleas and prayers from such people, people who realized that this universe is no exercise in futility and that is is brimming with open proofs of the great power and wisdom of its Creator. So, once they knew their Creator and Sustainer, they submitted before Him.

1. The first request they make is: قِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ : Save us from the Fire.

2. The second request is: Save us from the disgrace of the Hereafter for whoever is condemned to the Fire stands humiliated before the whole world. Some scholars have said that humiliation on the plains of Ressurection will be so disgraceful a punishment that one

would wish to be cast into the (fire of) Hell but that the multitudes present on that fateful day do not get to hear about his or her misdeeds.

3. The third request is: 'We have heard the message given by the herald sent by You, that is, the message of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and we believed in him. So, forgive our major sins and expiate our shortcomings and misdeeds and give us death in the company of the righteous, that is, make us a part of their group.'

These three requests were aimed at safety against punishment and pain and loss. The fourth request is about promised blessings, the blessings of Paradise promised through the noble prophets. This prayer for blessings is being made with the added request that there be no disgrace on the Day of Judgment. In other words, the request is to be excused from the torturous procedure of accounting (for all of one's deeds), disgrace (as a result of misdeeds) and then forgiveness (on account of Allah's mercy). The prayer is for outright forgiveness for Allah does not go back on His word. What is the purpose of this submission and re-submission? The purpose is to say: O Allah, enable us to become deserving, and a beneficiary of this promise (made by You), and enable us to remain steadfast so that we breath our last in this world with faith in our heart (ایمان) and busy doing what is good in Your sight (عمل صالح).

Verses 195 - 199

فَاسْتَجَابَ لَهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ أَنِّي لَا أُضِيعُ عَمَلَ عَامِلٍ مِّنكُم مِّن
ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أُنثَىٰ ۖ بَعْضُكُم مِّن بَعْضٍ ۖ فَالَّذِينَ هَاجَرُوا وَأُخْرِجُوا
مِن دِيَارِهِمْ وَأُوذُوا فِي سَبِيلِي وَقَاتَلُوا وَقُتِلُوا لَأُكَفِّرَنَّ عَنْهُمْ
سَيِّئَاتِهِمْ وَلَأُدْخِلَنَّهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِن تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ ثَوَابًا مِّن
عِندِ اللَّهِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ عِندَهُ حُسْنُ الثَّوَابِ ﴿١٩٥﴾ لَا يَغُرَّنَّكَ تَقَلُّبُ
الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فِي الْبِلَادِ ﴿١٩٦﴾ مَتَاعٌ قَلِيلٌ ثُمَّ مَأْوَاهُمْ
جَهَنَّمُ ۚ وَبِئْسَ الْمِهَادُ ﴿١٩٧﴾ لَٰكِنِ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا رَبَّهُمْ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتٌ

تَجْرِيْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَا نُزُلًا مِّنْ عِنْدِ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَمَا
عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ خَيْرٌ لِّلْاَبْرَارِ ﴿١٩٨﴾ وَاِنَّ مِنْ اَهْلِ الْكِتٰبِ لَمَنْ يُّؤْمِنُ
بِاللّٰهِ وَمَآ اُنْزِلَ اِلَيْكُمْ وَمَآ اُنْزِلَ اِلَيْهِمْ خٰشِعِيْنَ لِلّٰهِ ۙ لَا
يَشْتَرُوْنَ بِاٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ ثَمَنًا قَلِيْلًا ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ لَهُمْ اَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ ؕ
اِنَّ اللّٰهَ سَرِيْعُ الْحِسَابِ ﴿١٩٩﴾

So, their Lord answered their prayer, "I do not let go to waste the labour of a worker from you, male or female. You are from one another. So, those who emigrated, and were expelled from their homes, and were tortured in My way, and fought, and were killed, I shall certainly write off their evil deeds, and shall certainly admit them into gardens beneath which rivers flow, being a reward from Allah. And it is Allah with Whom is the beauty of reward. [195] **The moving of the disbelievers about the earth should not deceive you.** [196] **It is just a little enjoyment. After that their resort is Hell, and it is an evil abode.** [197] **But those who fear their Lord, for them there are Gardens beneath which rivers flow, where they shall live forever - hospitality from Allah. And what is with Allah is best for the righteous.** [198] **And surely, among the people of the Book there are those who believe in Allah and in what has been sent down to you and what has been sent down to them humbling themselves before Allah. They do not barter away the verses of Allah for paltry (worldly) gains. They have their reward with their Lord. Surely, Allah is swift at reckoning.** [199]

Mentioned in verses previous to this were some prayers made by good believers.

The first verse (195) appearing above reports that these prayers have been accepted and believers have been given the good news that great rewards have been marked for their good deeds. In the second and third verses (196-197), Muslims have been instructed not to be deceived by the apparent affluence and worldwide maneuvering of disbelievers for this is transitory and the punishment which follows in its wake is eternal.

The fourth verse (198) reasserts the promise of the lasting blessings of Paradise for Muslims who always keep fearing Allah.

The fifth verse (199) particularly mentions the great reward that awaits those Muslims who used to be from among the People of the Book but chose to embrace Islam as their faith.

Commentary

While explaining the statement: لَاُكَفِّرَنَّ عَنۡهُمۡ سَيِّاٰتِهِمۡ (I shall certainly write off their evil deeds) in Verse 195, Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thānavī has restricted it to the forgiveness of sins and shortcomings relating to the fulfillment of the rights of Allah. The reason is that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said in *Ḥadith* that debts are not included under the purview of this verse. The rule is that the person concerned or his heirs should pay off the debt or have it forgiven. There is no other alternative in this case unless Allah Almighty is specially generous for someone and puts it in the heart of the wronged party that they should relent and forgive. This would, then, be a different matter. In fact, with some, this would also be the case.

So, let us keep in mind that all sins are forgiven following *Hijrah* (Emigration) and *Shahādah* (Surrendering life in the way of Allah, martyrdom) but the forgiveness of debts and other rights of people (*Ḥuqūqul-'Ibād*) has not been promised.

Verse 200

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوا اصۡبِرُوۡا وَصَابِرُوۡا وَرَابِطُوۡا ۗ وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ لَعَلَّكُمۡ تُفۡلِحُوۡنَ ﴿۲۰۰﴾

O those who believe, be patient, be more patient than others, and guard your frontiers, and fear Allah, so that you may be successful. [200]

This is the last verse of Sūrah 'Āl-'Imrān. The advice given here is quintessential for all Muslims.

Commentary

There are three things in the verse Muslims have been charged with. These are *Ṣabr, Muṣābarah* and *Murābaṭah*. The fourth element is *Taqwā* which is a necessary ingredient of all three. Their meanings are being given below.

Literally, the Arabic word '*Ṣabr*' means 'to hold' or 'to tie'. In the terminology of the Qur'ān and Sunnah, *Ṣabr*' is the effort made to control and defend one's slippery self against what is temperamentally unpleasing. This '*Ṣabr*' (roughly translated as 'patience' for want of an exact equivalent) takes three forms:

1. Patience with Duties: It means that everything commanded by Almighty Allah and His Messenger must be obediently pursued, no matter how burdensome the adherence to them may appear to be. The aim is to keep one's self almost rivetted to carry out injunctions despite hinderances.

2. Patience against Sins: It means holding the desiring self back from whatever has been prohibited by Allah and His Messenger, no matter how desirable and appealing it may be.

3. Patience in Distress: It means enduring in hardship and forbearing in pain and avoiding excessive anxiety. Such patience requires that all pain and comfort be taken to have come from Allah and from this realization comes the strength to keep one's self under control.

The word, '*Muṣābarah*' is a derivation from *Ṣabr*. It means staying firm and steadfast against the enemy.

The word, '*Murābaṭah*' comes from '*Rabṭ*'. Root-wise, it means 'to tie' and it is for this reason that '*Ribāṭ*' and '*Murābaṭah*' are taken to mean 'to tie horses' and 'get ready for war'. The Holy Qur'ān has used '*Ribāṭ*' in وَمِنْ رِبَاطِ الْخَيْلِ (of trained horses - 8:60) in that very sense. However, in the terminology of the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth, this word has been used in two senses:

1. To secure Islamic frontiers for which it is necessary to be armed with military hardware, conventional or modern, so that the enemy abstains from venturing against Islamic frontiers.

2. To be so observant of and bound by making *Ṣalāh* with *Jamā'ah* that one starts looking forward to making the next *Ṣalāh* soon after having performed one.

Both these are highly acclaimed acts of worship in Islam. Out of their numerous merits, some are being given below:

***Ribāṭ*: The Guarding of Islamic Frontiers**

Staying along the Islamic frontiers to guard the area in battle-ready condition is known as '*Ribāṭ*' and '*Murābaṭah*'. It takes two forms. Firstly, there may be no danger of war breaking out, the border is secure and the duty is limited to being vigilant enough to ward off any impending threat. Under such condition, it is quite permissible for those on duty to start living there with their families and earn their living through farming or some such occupation. Under this condition, if the real intention is to guard and defend Islamic borders and living and earning there remains subservient to this intention, this person will get the reward for 'staying in the way of Allah' (رِبَاطٍ فِیْ سَبِیْلِ اللّٰهِ), even if he never fights. But, anyone whose real intention is not to guard and defend Islamic frontiers but would simply be there to eke out a living - even if he gets the chance of guarding the borders casually - this person will not be considered as 'one who stays in the way of Allah'. The other eventuality may be that the border is threatened by possible enemy attack. Under such condition, keeping women and children close by is not correct; only those who can fight against the enemy should live there. (Qurṭubī)

There are countless merits in both these cases. In the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī, it has been reported from Sayyidnā Sahl ibn Sa'd Sā'adī that the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said: *Ribāṭ* for a day in the way of Allah is better than whatever there is in the whole world. In the Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim, it has been reported from Sayyidnā Salmān that the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said: *Ribāṭ* for a day and night is better than fasting for a whole month and standing in prayers for the entire night. Should one die in that state, the daily reward for his act of staying in the way of Allah will continue to reach him for ever. His sustenance will keep coming from Almighty Allah and he will stay protected against the Satan.

Abū Dawūd reports from Fuḍālah ibn 'Ubayd that the Holy Prophet

صلى الله عليه وسلم said: The roster of deeds credited to the person who dies ends with his death except in the case of a *Murābiṭ* (one who stays in the way of Allah) whose roster of good deeds goes on multiplying right through to the Day of Judgment and he remains covered against (the fear of punishment) on account of the scrutiny of deeds in his grave.

These narrations indicate that the act of staying in the way of Allah (*Ribāṭ*) is superior even to every charity the benefit of which keeps going on and on (*Ṣadaqah Jāriyah*). This is because the reward for charity the benefits of which continue lasts only upto the time people keep benefiting from the endowment of house, land, book or library. Once this benefit stops reaching people, the incumbent reward also stops. But, the reward of the person who stays in the way of Allah is not going to stop until the Day of Judgment. The reason is that Muslims as a community can continue doing what is good only when they are well-protected against enemy attacks. Thus, the act of a person who stays on to defend Islamic frontiers becomes the cause of good deeds performed by all Muslim in a peaceful setting. Therefore, the reward of such *Ribāṭ fī sabīlillāh* (staying in the way of Allah) will continue until the Day of Judgment. In addition to that, the reward for whatever other good deeds he used to do during his life in the world will continue without his having to actually do them. This is as it appears in ibn Mājah in an authentic narration from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah where he reports that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said:

من مات مرابطا فی سبیل الله اجری علیه اجر عمله الصالح الذی کان یعمله واجری علیه رزقه وامن من الفتان وبعثه الله یوم القیمة امنا من الفزع (تفسیر القرطبی)

One who dies in a state of *Ribāṭ* in the way of Allah, the reward of whatever good he used to do in his mortal life will continue and so will his sustenance and he will stay protected against Satan and Allah will raise him on the Day of *Qiyāmah* free from fear. (Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī)

The merits mentioned in this narration are subject to the condition that the person meets his death while staying on the border to guard Islamic frontiers. But, there are other reports which indicate that his

post-death reward will still continue even if he were to return alive back to his family.

Sayyidnā Ubayy ibn Ka'b narrates that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: The reward for sincerely guarding the weak border area of Muslims for one day, other than those of Ramaḍān, is superior to the reward for continuous fasting and nightly worship for one hundred years. *Ribāṭ* for one day in Ramaḍān is superior to fasting and nightly worship for one thousand years (the narrator has expressed some doubt about the later). Then, he said: If Allah sends him back to his family in good health, no sin will be recorded in his name for a thousand years while good deeds will continue to be entered in his roster and the reward for his act of having stayed at the border to defend Islamic frontiers will keep coming to him until the Day of Judgment (Qurṭubi).

Offering *Ṣalāh* with *Jamā'ah* and waiting for the next is also 'staying in the way of Allah'

Sayyidnā Abū Salamān ibn 'Abdur-Raḥmān narrates that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: I tell you something because of which Almighty Allah would forgive your sins and raise your spiritual status. These are: Making *Wuḍū* precisely and perfectly despite chilly weather or pain or wound because of which the washing of body parts that must be washed while making *wuḍū* may appear to be hard to do; and going to the *Masjid* time and again more than often; and waiting to make the next *Ṣalāh* following the one already made. Then, he said: ذلكم الرباط : For you, this is the *Ribāṭ* (staying to guard Islamic frontiers in the way of Allah).

After having reported this *ḥadīth*, Imām al-Qurṭubī has said that in the light of this *ḥadīth* it can be hoped that a person who adheres to the practice of waiting between two prayers with congregation will receive the reward which has been mentioned in *aḥādīth* for *Ribāṭ* in the way of Allah.

Special Note:

In this verse, Muslims have been instructed to remain patient which is possible any time under all conditions. Relevant details have

appeared earlier. The second instruction given is to be more patient than others which is to be demonstrated while fighting disbelievers. The third instruction relates to a situation when an armed conflict with disbelievers is likely and there is the danger that fighting may erupt anytime. Finally comes the instruction to observe *Taqwā* (fear of Allah) which is the essence of everything one does and on which depends the Divine acceptance of what has been done. This set of instructions is the sum of almost all injunctions of the Sharī'ah. May Almighty Allah give all of us the best of ability to act in accordance with these instructions.

The Commentary on
Sūrah 'Āl-'Imrān ends here.

Sūrah Al-Nisā'

Verses 1 - 2

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ

يٰٓاَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوْا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِىْ خَلَقَكُمْ مِّنْ نَّفْسٍ وَّاحِدَةٍ وَّخَلَقَ
مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا وَبَثَّ مِنْهُمَا رِجَالًا كَثِيْرًا وَّ نِسَآءً ۚ وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ
الَّذِىْ تَسَآءَلُوْنَ بِهٖ وَالْاَرْحَامَ ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ عَلَيْكُمْ رَقِيْبًا ﴿١﴾
وَاٰتُوا الْيَتٰمٰٓى اَمْوَالَهُمْ وَلَا تَتَبَدَّلُوا الْخَبِيْثَ بِالطَّيِّبِ وَلَا
تَاْكُلُوْٓا اَمْوَالَهُمْ اِلٰٓى اَمْوَالِكُمْ ۭ اِنَّهٗ كَانَ حُوْبًا كَبِيْرًا ﴿٢﴾

With the name of Allah, The All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful.

O men, fear your Lord who created you from a single soul, and from it created its match, and spread from the two, many men and women. And fear Allah in whose name you ask each other (for your rights), and surely, Allah is watchful over you. [1] **And give the orphans their property, and do not substitute what is bad for what is good, and do not eat up their property alongwith your own. It is, surely, a great sin.** [2]

Sequence

The last verse of Sūrah 'Āl-'Imrān was concluded with an exhortation to *Taqwā*, the fear of Allah. The present Sūrah begins with *Taqwā* in the mode of command. The previous Sūrah mentioned some battles, described the manner of treating antagonists, condemned misappropriation in battle spoils and took up several other matters. In the earlier part of the present Sūrah, there are injunctions about rights related to one's own people which must be fulfilled while living and inter-acting with them, such as, the rights of orphans, relatives and wives (known as *Ḥuqūqul-'Ibād*: the rights of the servants of Allah). But, there are some rights which are justiciable, that is, their fulfillment can be enforced through law, like common transactions of buying and selling. The rights involved in lease, tenancy and wages can be

settled through mutual agreements and arbitration; should a party fall short in fulfilling settled rights, these can be legally retrieved and enforced. But, the fulfillment of the rights of those in one's own charge - children, parents, husband and wife, and orphans - and the rights of other relatives which fall on each other - all depend upon civilized behaviour, respect, loving and caring, and above all on that genuinely heart-felt desire to do what is good for them. These are behaviour patterns which cannot be weighed on a scale of things. That they be determined fully and perfectly through mutual agreements is also much too difficult. Therefore, there is just no other method of their fulfillment except having the fear of Allah and the fear of what would happen in the life to come. This is known as *Taqwā* and the truth of the matter is that this power of *Taqwā* is more effective than the combined powers of government and law. Hence, the Sūrah opens with the command of *Taqwā* when it says: يَٰٓأَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُم (O men, fear your Lord).

The word, '*ittaqū*' translated here as 'fear' means 'fear acting against your Lord' which perhaps is the reason why the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم used to recite this verse as part of his address while solemnizing a marriage. Therefore, reciting it in the *Khuṭbah* of *Nikāḥ* is a perenniel revival of the Sunnah. Here, the form of address in the verse is worth attention. It says: يَٰٓأَيُّهَا النَّاسُ (O men) which includes all human beings, men or women, and whether they are present at the time of the revelation of the Qur'ān or shall continue to be born right through to the Day of Doom. Then, alongwith the command of '*ittaqū*' (fear) the word used is '*Rabb*' (Lord) which has been selected out of the most fair names of Allah. This is to point out that the fear of Allah so enjoined has a justification and wisdom of its own. The Being totally responsible for man's nurture the manifestations of Whose Lord-worthiness he witnesses every moment of his life, certainly deserves all the awe one is capable of. The very thought that anyone could rise in antagonism and defiance against Allah is terribly dangerous.

Immediately after, the text brings into focus the most exalted majesty of the Lord by saying that He created human beings, all of them, in His wisdom and mercy. Here it was quite possible to create and cause to be present, whatever it was to be, in more than one way.

But, He chose to have one way and one form, a very particular one, when he created all human beings from the one and only human being, that is, Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام, and thus it was that He tied all of them in a strong bond of brotherhood. So, it is not only the fear of Allah and the fear of *Ākhirah* (Hereafter) which demand man's allegiance to the Lord of all creation, but this bond of brotherhood between human beings also requires that rights of humanity - of mutual sympathy, well-being and collective good - be fully discharged. And between man and man, let there be no one high or low in race or caste, in colour or language, and that all such distinctions be never made the criterion of good or bad, nobility or meanness. Therefore, it was said: الَّذِىْ خَلَقَكُمْ مِّنْ نَّفْسٍ وَّاحِدَةٍ وَّ خَلَقَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا وَبَثَّ مِنْهُمَا رِجَالًا كَثِيْرًا وَّ نِسَآءً meaning 'who has created you from a single soul (that is, Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام who is the father of all human beings), and from it created its match (that is, his wife, Ḥawwā' (Eve), and spread from the two, many men and women (in the world)'.

In short, this verse serves as an introduction to injunctions which are going to appear in this Sūrah. The purpose here is to dissuade human beings from becoming the usurpers of Divine rights, while at the same time, by telling them that they all are the children of the same father, the wonderful humane dimension of love, mutual sympathy and concern was given as the working hypothesis of common living, so that the mutual rights of relatives, orphans and married couples could be fulfilled right from the heart at the very grass-root level.

Towards the end of verse 1, the exhortation to fear Allah has been beamed at man from yet another angle. Is'nt it that man demands his rights from others in the name of Allah and exacts what he wants from them? It means that one who expects others to fear Allah should do that himself as well. The last word, *wal-arḥām,* is there to warn that any shortcoming in taking good care of near relations, whether from the side of one's father or mother, should be avoided.

The second verse emphasizes the rights of orphaned children and establishes rules to protect their property.

The commentary which follows takes up the last two aspects of near relations and orphans in some detail.

Commentary

Treating Near Relations Well:

The word, *'al-arḥām'* in verse 1 is the plural of *raḥim*. *Raḥim* is womb. The womb of the mother is the home of the child until born. Since this womb is the source of blood relationship, the act of maintaining relations in that line is called *ṣilatur-raḥim* in Arabic (literally, umbilical link or bond or relationship). The converse of it, that is, showing carelessness and indifference towards natural linkage based on blood relationship is identified as *qaṭ'-al-raḥim* (literally, umbilical delinkage, meaning cutting off relationship with one's kin).

The noble *aḥādīth* have laid great emphasis on bonds of kinship. The Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم has said:

من احب ان یبسط له فی رزقه وینسأ له فی اثره فلیصل رحمه

> Whoever likes to have his livelihood made plentiful and his age extended for him should maintain good relations with his near of kin. (Mishkāt, p. 419)

This *ḥadīth* tells us about two benefits that issue forth from treating near relations well. The merit of the Hereafter vouchsafed, this fair treatment of one's kin has its benefits in this life as well, that is, it removes straightenings from his livelihood and blesses his age with more good years.

Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Salām رضی اللہ عنہ says: When the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم came to Madīnah al-Tayyibah and I presented myself before him, the very first words from him which fell into my ears were:

یا ایها الناس افشوا السلام واطعموا الطعام وصلوا الارحام، وصلوا
باللیل والناس ینام، تدخلوا الجنة بسلام

> O men, make a practice of greeting each other with *salām*, and feed people (for the pleasure of Allah), and treat near relations well, and pray by night while people sleep - you will enter Paradise in peace. (Mishkāt, p. 108)

In another *ḥadīth*, it has been reported that *Ummul-Mu'minīn* (the Mother of the Faithful) Sayyidah Maymūna رضی اللہ عنہا had freed her bond woman. When she told the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم about it, he said:

لواعطيتها اخوالك كان اعظم لاجرك

Had you given her to your maternal uncle, your reward would have been greater. (Mishkāt, p. 171)

Although, Islam motivates people to free slaves and rates it as one of the finest acts of merit, yet the status of treating relatives fairly has been given more importance. There is another narration on the same subject in which the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been reported to have said:

الصدقة علي المسكين صدقة وهي على ذى الرحم ثنتان صدقة وصلة

Charity to the needy is just charity, while to a near relative it becomes two fold: charity and kinship. (Mishkāt, p. 171)

Hence, a simple change in the end-use of charity yields two types of merits.

As opposed to this there is the attitude of cold-shouldering or severing of blood relationships. How stern are the warnings given in *ḥadīth* reports against this can be imagined from the following two *aḥādīth*:

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said:

(١) لا يدخل الجنّة قاطعٌ

1. A breaker of (blood) relationships shall not enter Paradise. (Mishkāt, p. 419)

(٢) لا تنزل الرحمة على قوم فيه قاطع رحم

2. Mercy shall not descend upon a people among whom there is a breaker of (blood) relationships. (Mishkāt, p. 420)

The statement in the last sentence of this verse: إِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ عَلَيْكُمْ رَقِيْبًا (and surely, Allah is watchful over you) motivates human hearts to fulfil rights as and when they are due because Divine watchfulness implies awareness of whatever there is in human hearts - intentions, scruples, motives - everything. Doing things half-heartedly, formally, or for fear of possible embarrassment, without any genuine desire to serve, shall remain acts unacceptable to Allah. Incidentally, from here we find out why Allah should be feared - because He is watchful over everyone, always. As pointed out elsewhere too, this is typical of the

usual style of the Holy Qur'ān when it does not introduce laws in sheer cold print like the laws of the governments of this world, but puts them forth in the manner of education, training and affection by not restricting itself to the word of law alone, but by combining it with the grooming of minds and hearts as well.

The Rights of the Orphans and the Protection of Their Property:

The first verse stressed upon the care and concern for kinship in an absolute sense. Then came the general emphasis on the fulfillment of rights that issue forth from it. Now, the second verse carries the command to protect the properties of the orphans, as well as the prohibition of any misappropriation therein because the guardian of an orphaned child is usually one of his relatives. Therefore, this too has a bearing on the fulfillment of the rights of kinship.

The word, *'al-yatāmā'* in the first sentence of verse 2: وَاٰتُوا الْيَتٰمٰٓى اَمْوَالَهُمْ (And give the orphans their property), is the plural of *al-yatīm* (the orphan). Literally, it means the lone or the unique. Therefore, a pearl that resides in its shell all alone is called *Ad-Durr al-Yatīm* (literally, 'the orphan-pearl'). In the terminology of Islamic law, a *yatīm* is a child whose father has died. Incidentally, among animals, a *yatīm* is an offspring whose mother has died (Qāmūs). When a child attains maturity, that is, becomes pubert, he is no more referred to as *yatīm* in the terminology of Islamic law as it has been clarified in a *ḥadīth* which says: لايتم بعد احتلام that is, 'Orphanhood ends with puberty'. (Mishkāt, p. 284)

If orphaned children have property, either gifted to them or received by them through someone's inheritance, then, the responsibility of protecting this property, as well as the orphan himself, falls on the shoulders of the person who is the guardian of the orphan. It does not matter whether the guardian of the orphan was appointed by the father of the orphan himself before his death, or by the government. It is part of the guardian's duty that he should certainly cover all costs incurred on the necessary maintenance of the orphan from what he owns, but he should not give what the orphan owns into his possession before he has reached the age of maturity because he, being an immature minor, may lose it somewhere. So, the statement: 'give

the orphans their property', in this verse, has been clarified a little later in verse 5 where it has been said that the property of the orphans should be given to them after it is certain that they have become mature and do have the ability to distinguish between what is good for them and what is not.

Therefore, the meaning of 'give the orphans their property' in this verse should be taken in the sense of protecting their property so that it could be given to them at its appropriate time. Furthermore, there is a clear hint in this sentence towards the extent to which the guardian of the orphan is responsible for his welfare. It is being said here that his responsibility is not limited to just that he himself refrains from eating up or squandering the property of the orphan, but it is also an integral part of his duties that he should do everything possible to protect, guard and conserve the property in the best of state, capable of being handed over to him when mature.

The second sentence: وَلَا تَتَبَدَّلُوا الْخَبِيثَ بِالطَّيِّبِ prohibits the substitution of bad things for the good ones. There were people who would let the number of things owned by the orphan stay unaltered, but would take something good from there and substitute it with something bad they themselves had. For example, swapping a lean goat for a healthy one, a bad coin for a good one, and things like that. Since, this too is a breach of trust in respect of the property of the orphan, and in the event that someone driven by his naughty self comes up with the excuse that he has not 'taken' what belonged to the orphan, he has rather 'exchanged' it. So, the Holy Qur'ān has forbidden it explicitly. Now, this forbiddance not only covers the substitution of one's bad things for the orphan's good things, but it also covers any attempt by the guardian to enter into any deal with some other person which results in a loss for the orphaned child.

The third sentence: وَلَا تَأْكُلُوا أَمْوَالَهُمْ إِلَىٰ أَمْوَالِكُمْ (and do not eat up their property alongwith your own) obviously aims to forbid the eating up of the orphan's property through impermissible methods whether it is consumed from the jointly-held property of the guardian and the orphan, or that it is held separately and consumed from there. But, the general practice is that the guardian would hold what belongs to the orphan with his own personal holdings, would himself consume

out of there and let the orphan do the same. Since no separate accounting is involved here, even a religiously observing Muslim may fall into thinking that there was no sin in doing so. It was for this particular reason that the prohibition of consuming what belongs to the orphan by pooling it with one's own was mentioned here and warning was given to either keep the property of the orphan absolutely separate and spend from it separately so that there remains no danger of any excess; or should one elect to have a joint-expense system, then, the accounts maintained should be so clear that one can be sure of not having spent anything belonging to the orphan on his own person or in his interest. A detailed explanation of this has already appeared in وَاللّٰهُ يَعْلَمُ الْمُفْسِدَ مِنَ الْمُصْلِحِ (2:220) - Section 27 of Sūrah al-Baqarah, Volume 1 of this commentary.

The style of expression here gives a hint that those who misappropriate the property of orphans are generally the people who have properties of their own as well. So, it is by implication that such people have been reproached for stooping down to eat up the property of the orphans unlawfully while they have their own lawful belongings at hand - a shameful act indeed.

It will be noted that verse (2) mentions the prohibition of "eating" the property of the orphan because "eating" is one of the major end-uses of what one possesses. But, in common usage, every act of using up, consuming and exhausting is referred to as "eating up" - whether this be by 'using' or by 'eating'. The expression, "*lā ta'kulū*" (do not eat up) in the Holy Qur'ān carries this very sense of the usage, included in which are all sorts of impermissible uses. Therefore, spending anything from the property of the orphan unlawfully by any means whatsoever is absolutely *ḥarām* (forbidden).

The verse ends with the admonition, إِنَّهُ كَانَ حُوبًا كَبِيرًا (It is, surely, a great sin.) Here, the word '*ḥūb*', as said by Sayyidnā ibn 'Abbās, comes from the Ethiopean language. It means: 'major sin'. It is used in Arabic for the same meaning. The sense is that any unlawful appropriation or use of the orphan's property, be it because of lack of supervision or substitution of something bad for something good or because of consuming the orphan's assets as mixed up with one's own, is a great sin after all.

The stern warning to those who eat up the property of an orphan appears later towards the end of this section (4:10).

Verse 3

وَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ أَلَّا تُقْسِطُوا فِي الْيَتٰمٰى فَانْكِحُوا مَا طَابَ لَكُمْ
مِّنَ النِّسَآءِ مَثْنٰى وَثُلٰثَ وَرُبٰعَ فَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ أَلَّا تَعْدِلُوا فَوَاحِدَةً
أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ ذٰلِكَ أَدْنٰى أَلَّا تَعُولُوا ﴿٣﴾

And if your fear that you will not do justice to the orphan, then, marry the women you like, in twos, in threes and in fours. But, if you fear that you will not maintain equity, then (keep to) one woman, or a bond-woman you own. It will be closer to your not doing injustice. [3]

Sequence

In the previous verse, guardians were warned against pilferage or misappropriation in the property of orphans. The present verse is an extension of the basic command from another angle. Here they are warned against any attempt to marry orphaned girls under their guardianship hoping to get away by fixing a dower of their choice and claiming their properties as additional benefit.

So, the Holy Qur'ān has very clearly declared that every excuse, device or strategem set up to usurp the property of the orphan is impermissible. It is the duty of the guardians that they should protect the rights of the orphans honestly.

Commentary

Orphaned girls: Violation of their rights and its prevention:

During *Jāhiliyyah* guardians holding orphaned girls under their charge used to pick up the ones who had good looks or owned properties of value and marry them or arranged to have them married to their sons. They would fix the dower of their choice, usually the lowest, and maintained them in whatever manner they elected for they were the very guardians and caretakers for them. Their fathers were not there to take care of their rights who would have certainly given them in marriage to a suitable person after full deliberation on all aspects a daughter faces in married life and would have made sure that they

remain happy and well-covered.

There is a narration in Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī from Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی اللہ عنہا which reports that an incident of this nature came to pass during the blessed time of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم. There was someone who had an orphaned girl under his guardianship. He had a fruit-farm in which this girl held a share. This man married the orphaned girl and, rather than give her dower and things from his pocket, took her very share in the farm in his possession. Thereupon, the following verse was revealed:

وَاِنْ خِفْتُمْ اَلَّا تُقْسِطُوْا فِى الْيَتٰمٰى فَانْكِحُوْا مَا طَابَ لَكُمْ مِّنَ النِّسَآءِ

> And if you fear that you will not do justice to the orphans, then marry the women you like...

It means that if you apprehend that after marrying a girl under your guardianship, you cannot do justice to her, then, instead of marrying her, you should marry other women of your choice.

The Marriage of Minors

The word, *'yatāmā'* in this verse means orphaned girls. In the terminology of the Sharī'ah, a *'yatīm'* is a boy or girl who has not yet attained the age of puberty. So, this verse proves that the guardian of an orphaned girl does have the right to give her in marriage while she is a minor and has not attained the age of puberty, but on condition that this decision is based on wisdom and the future welfare of the girl. This is to avoid unfair practices common in some communities where a grown up girl is married to a child without any regard for the difference in their ages or without any investigation into the living conditions or character of the boy.

The orphaned girls who have attained the age of puberty are, no doubt, entitled to choose their husbands freely on the basis of their majority. Nevertheless, girls (in traditionally Islamic societies) tend to be modest and shy and usually would not come out strong or freely express their opinions in matters relating to their marriage inspite of being major and having the right to choose. As a result, they are likely to accept what their guardians do for them in good faith. If so, it is the bounden duty of guardians that they too should stay clear from taking any step that may violate the rights of orphaned girls.

In short, this verse lays down the injunction that total vigilance should be observed to make sure that the marital rights of orphaned girls are not violated in any manner whatsoever. However, the responsibility of enforcing this injunction ha not been directly placed on the shoulders of the government as is usual with laws promulgated by governments. Instead of that, people themselves have been commanded to fear Allah and do what is right. That is, should they apprehend injustice in marrying orphaned girls, they must cast off the idea and marry elsewhere from a wide range of choices available.

Added to this Divine motivation to abide by prescribed law is the responsibility placed on its enforcing agencies in the government. It is their duty to oversee that there occurs no such violation of rights in the society. If it does, they must use the force of law to ensure that these rights are fulfilled as due.

Polygamy and its currency before Islam

That one man could have more than one wife was something considered permissible in all religions of the world even before the advent of Islām. The custom prevailed in Arabia, India, Iran, Egypt, Babylon and among peoples elsewhere. Its natural validity cannot be denied even to this day. The Europeans of the present age tried to break away from the practice of their predecessors and made multiplicity of marriage impermissible. It resulted in the multiplicity of concubines and girl-friends retained out of wedlock. It was the validity of the natural that there has been a consistent opinion bank in the West (though not so effective) which recognizes the efficacy of plurality of marriage. Davenport, the well-known Christian writer has deduced from the Bible that plurality of wives is not only favourable but is a source of blessing from God. Others such as Father Nixon, John Milton and Isac Taylor have supported this view strongly. Similarly, Vedic teachings permit unlimited number of wives, even in tens and thirteens and twenty sevens, at one time. Shri Krishna, a highly respected deity among Hindus, had hundreds of wives.

The truth of the matter is that a religion or law which aims to establish an infra-structure of chastity and modesty and considers the eradication of adultery as necessary has no way out except that it permits plurality of wives. Apart from being a preventive measure

against adultery, it serves as a remedial approach to the problem of comparatively larger female population in some areas as compared to that of men. If such permission was not granted, mistresses and prostitutes will proliferate. This is why nations which do not permit plurality of wives must live in rampant adultery (calling it 'free sex' hardly changes the reality). Even in our own time, if we look at the state of nations in Europe and America, we will see that they look down on what they call polygamy and put a ban on plurality of wives, but they permit a man to practice adultery with as many women as he can get under the cover of 'friendship', (and unlimited are the euphimisms invented to give it other names, such as, 'relationship', 'affair', 'consenting adults', 'union', 'partner' to get around the ban). Saying no to marriage and yes to adultery is certainly very strange!

To be short, we can say that the custom of taking a large number of wives was prevailing before Islam without any imposition of limits. The history of nations and beliefs shows that no religion or law had drawn a line in this matter, neither the Jews and Christians, nor the Hindus and Aryans or the Zoarastrians.

During the early period of Islam, this custom continued without being limited. As a result, people initially took too many wives to satisfy their greed. Later on they could not do justice to all of them and these wives of theirs lived like prisoners bound in the chains of marriage. Under such conditions, the idea of an equitable treatment of wives was practically non-existant. It was all a matter of personal choice or whim which could make the darling of the day a history of tomorrow. The concern for standing rights was a far cry.

It was the Holy Qur'ān which stopped this great injustice prevailing in the human society at large. It restricted the plurality or multiplicity of wives by declaring that keeping more than four women under the bond of marriage was forbidden (*ḥarām*). In addition to that, stern warning was given against any contravention of the Divine command which emphatically demanded that equality in fulfilling the rights of women taken into the bond of marriage at the same time must be maintained faithfully. The words of the verse are:

فَانْكِحُوا مَا طَابَ لَكُمْ مِّنَ النِّسَآءِ مَثْنٰى وَثُلٰثَ وَرُبٰعَ

The expression مَا طَابَ : *'mā ṭāba'* in this verse, as explained by Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, Ibn Jubair and Ibn Mālik, may the mercy of Allāh be upon them, means مَا حَلَّ : *'mā ḥalla'*, that is, women who are lawful for you.

There are others who, taking the literal meaning of *'mā ṭāba'*, have explained it to mean, 'whom you like'. But, there is no contradiction here. It could simply mean, 'women you like out of your natural inclination and that they be lawful for you in terms of the Sharī'ah as well.'

On the one hand, permission has been given in this verse that more than one wife can be conjoined in marriage in twos, threes or fours; while, on the other, after having taken the number to four, restriction was placed that more than four women cannot be taken in marriage at one given time.

This particular restriction of the Holy Qur'ān was made much more clear by a ruling given by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم . It has been reported that, soon after the revelation of this verse a person by the name of Ghailān ibn Aslamah al-Thaqafī embraced Islam. At that time, he had ten wives who had also embraced Islam. Pursuant to the Qur'ānic injunction, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم asked him to select and retain four and release the rest by giving them divorce. Ghailān ibn Aslamah al-Thaqafī obeyed the command, retained four women and severed his marital link with the rest (Mishkāt, p. 274, with reference to al-Tirmidhī and Ibn Mājah). Citing another incident appearing as a complement of this very narration in the Musnad of Imām Aḥmad will not really be out of place as it also relates to the rights of women.

According to this report, Ghailān ibn Aslamah had retained four women in accordance with the rule of Sharī'ah, but during the Caliphate of Sayyidnā 'Umar, رضى الله عنه he divorced them as well and distributed all his assets among his sons. When Sayyidnā 'Umar found this out, he summoned him and said: "You have done this to deprive these women from your inheritance which is a gross injustice. So, revoke the divorce you have given to them right now and take your assets back from your sons, and if you do not do this, then, beware of a severe punishment."

Qais ibn al-Ḥarith al-Asadī رضى الله عنه says: 'When I embraced Islam,

I had eight wives. I mentioned this to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. He said: "Keep four of them and divorce the rest." (Abū Dawūd, p. 304)

According to a report in Musnad al-Imām al-Shāfi'ī, when Sayyidnā Nawfal ibn Mu'āwiyah ad-Daylamī رضی الله عنه embraced Islam, he had five women in his *nikāh*. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم asked him too to divorce one woman. This incident appears in Mishkāt as well (p. 274) with reference to Sharḥ al-Sunnah. In short, the blessed practice of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and his noble Companions very clearly illustrates the meaning of this verse, that is, conjoining more than four women in the bond of marriage is *ḥarām* (forbidden).

The Noble Wives of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم

The class of his person and the excellences of his virtues make the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم mercy and blessing personified. The main purpose of his life in this mortal world was to spread the call of Islam, purify people and teach the Qur'ān. He, by his word and deed, made the teachings of Islam radiate all over the world. His unique style shows that he practiced what he taught. As such, there is no department of human life which can claim not to need the guidance of a prophet. So, right from the establishment of congregational prayer to maintaining good relations with wives, upbringing of children, even to the purificatory aspects of the human call of nature, there exists a roster of verbal and practical instructions left by him in the books of *Ḥadīth*. They tell us in great details the things he did inside the walls of his home, how he related to his wives and how he answered questions posed by women who visited his home for this purpose. Such questions can be counted in hundreds, questions that highlight the intermediacy of his blessed wives through whom the Muslim *ummah* received necessary guidance. Any other setting for this purpose would have been hard to bring about. So, this crucial religious need, the need for education, teaching and propagation made it all the more imperative that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم marry the wives he did. Think of Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی الله عنها. There are some two thousand and ten narrations reported from her. They cover a wide range of subjects which includes the explanation of the injunctions of the Holy Qur'ān, religious questions and their answers, morals and manners and the *Sīrah* of the Prophet of Islam. The narrations reported from Sayyidah

Umm Salmah رضى الله عنها reach upto three hundred and seventy eight. All these are readily available in books of *Ḥadīth*. In A'l-mul-Muwaqqi'īn (v.1, p.9), Ḥāfiẓ Ibn al-Qaiyyim has said: If the *fatawā* (religious rulings) of Sayyidah Umm Salmah رضى الله عنها which she gave after the demise of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم were to be collected it could become a treatise on its own.

The high rank Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها has in the narration and knowledge of *Ḥadīth* and in jurisprudence and rulings is far too well-known to repeat here. Her disciples alone come to around two hundred. She was the beacon light of religious knowledge for an uninterrupted period of forty eight long years after the demise of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and was highly effective in carrying his mission forward.

These brief remarks about two blessed wives of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم have been given here just to serve as an example, otherwise there are many more *ḥadīth* narrations originating from others as well. Obviously, the benefits of such religious teaching and preaching came through the good offices of these sacred ladies.

That the Prophet of Islam had the most exalted of objectives in sight, that he came in the golden line of great prophets, and that, as such, he saw the whole world as a unit and thought about correcting all human relationships individually, collectively and in families and in nations are spiritual ideals the modern man, the desire-driven robot of today, is simply incapable of conceptualizing. The most a he or she can do is to think of everybody else on his or her own personal analogy. This chronic malady in the intellectual makeup of the atheists and orientalists of West has taken them to feeling comfortable in perversity, the end-product of which is their mal-assessment of the otherwise unchallengable character of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم . According to their limits of 'civilized' thinking, his many marriages were simply an expression of his sexual desires (God forbid). To say the least, it can be said that anyone sane and just can never interpret his marriages to have issued forth from that source only if he were to even glance at his life and character.

Right before the eyes of the Quraysh tribe of Makkah, he led a blame-free life in a way that he, when twenty five, married an aged

widow with children (whose two earlier husbands had died) and went on living with her for the next twenty five years. It was also during this period that he used to leave home, sometimes for as long as a month, and stay in seclusion at the Cave of Ḥirā devoting his time to the remembrance of his Lord. All his marriages came after his blessed age was beyond fifty. The first fifty years of his life, specially his younger years and, his youth, were all too visible to the people of Makkah. Nobody, not even an enemy, ever found an occasion to point an accusing finger at him about anything that could put his pristine piety and purity in doubt. His enemies tried whatever arrows they had in their quiver. They accused him of being a magician, a sorcerer, a poet, madman, liar, fabricator. But, they never dared say anything, not one word, about his innocent life, about whatever could refer to any crookedness of extra-marital sex or passion.

Under these conditions, would it not be worth exploring as to why someone who had spent fifty years of his life in such righteousness and piety and in such peaceful abstinence from the good things of life, would be compelled to marry more than once? What was the urge? Anyone with the least fund of justice in him would not see any other reason behind this plurality of such marriages as being stated here. Now, let us go a little farther. Let us look at the very reality of these marriages as to how they came to pass.

From age twenty five to the blessed age of fifty, Sayyidah Khadījah رضی اللہ عنہا lived with him as the only wife. When she died, the marriage with Sayyidah Saudah and Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی اللہ عنہا was solemnized. But, it was Sayyidah Saudah who came to live with him while Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی اللہ عنہا continued to live with her father in view of her minority. It was after some years (in year 2 of the Hijrah) that Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah came to live with him at Madīnah Munawwarah. This is the time when he was in his fifty fourth year. At this age he had two wives. What is known as plurality of marriages starts from this point. After one year, his marriage with Sayyidah Ḥafṣah took place. After some months, Sayyidah Zainab bint Khuzaymah رضی اللہ عنہا came into his *nikāḥ* but died only eighteen months later. According to one report she lived only three months as his wife. Then, he was married to Sayyidah Umm Salmah رضی اللہ عنہ in 4 A.H. and to Sayyidah

Zainab bint Jaḥsh رضی اللہ عنہا in 5 A.H. This is the time when he was fifty eight. At this fairly advanced age, he had four wives, although he could have had four wives immediately after the Qur'ānic permission given to Muslims that they could, if need be, keep four wives. But, he never did this. Later, he married Sayyidah Juwayriyyah رضی اللہ عنہا in 6 A.H., Sayyidah Umm Ḥabībah رضی اللہ عنہا in 7 A.H., Sayyidah Ṣafiyyah رضی اللہ عنہا in 7 A.H. and Sayyidah Maymūnah رضی اللہ عنہا later on in the same year.

To sum up, we see that he lived with only one wife upto the age of fifty four years. In other words, he lived for twenty five years with Sayyidah Khadījah and four to five years with Sayyidah Saudah. After that, when he was fifty eight, he had four wives, the rest of the blessed wives came to live with him within a period of 2-3 years.

It is worth mentioning here that, out of all the wives he had, there was only one who was married to him as a virgin, that is, the Mother of the Faithful, Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah al-Ṣiddīqah رضی اللہ عنہا . Other than her, all wives, may Allah sanctify their honour, were widows (with the exception of lady Zainab bint Jaḥsh) - some of them were the ones who were already married twice and their husbands had died. This plurality, incidentally, came to pass in his later years.

Let us not forget that his noble Companions, both men and women who had seen him in the state of Islam, loved him dearly. They would have laid down their lives at his command. If he was so inclined to do, he would have married none but virgin wives. In fact, there was nothing to stop him from keeping a wife for one or two months and then take new ones in their place. But, he never did this.

There is yet another fact which needs to be mentioned here. Our master, Sayyidnā Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم was a true prophet of Allah and a prophet is no man of the mundane. He never follows his desires. What he does, he does with the leave and will of Allah. Once his prophethood is accepted, all objections stand eliminated. But, should there be one who not only refuses to accept a prophet as a prophet but goes a step farther and accuses that he allowed himself to take many wives to seek sexual gratification, then, such a person will be told: If this was so, why would the noble prophet proclaim the restriction against himself in matters relating to

plurality of marriages, something which finds mention in the verse لايحل لك النساء من بعد (It is not lawful for you to take (more) wives after this - 33:52). That he proclaimed this restriction against his own self, openly and conclusively proved that whatever he did, he did with the leave and will of his Lord. As pointed out earlier, the educational benefits because of this plurality of marriages that reached the Muslim community, as well as the very injunctions of Islam, are really so many and so detailed that they can just not be taken up here even at their briefest. Those who study books of *Aḥādīth* would realize the truth of this statement. However, we do present here brief notes to serve as indicators.

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had married Sayyidah Umm Salmah رضى الله عنها after her husband, Sayyidnā Abū Salmah had died. When she came to live with him in his house alongwith her children from her previous husband, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم took care of her children and brought them up with love and concern. Thus he demonstrated through his conduct the way of loving and caring one must follow when bringing up step children. Of his blessed wives, she was the only one who came with her children. If none of his wives was like her, this aspect of the upbringing of step children would have remained practically undemonstrated and the vast community of Muslims would have remained deprived of any guidance in this matter. Her son, 'Umar ibn Abī Salmah رضى الله عنه says: I was brought up in the lap of the Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم . Once, while eating with him, I was dunking my hand everywhere in the bowl. He said: سم الله وكل بيمينك وكل مما يليك (Say the name of Allah and eat with your right hand and eat from what is in front of you) - (Bukhārī, Muslim, from Mishkāt, p. 363).

Sayyidah Juwayriyyah رضى الله عنها came as a prisoner of *Jihād*. Like other prisoners, she too became one of the distributed and found herself in the share of Thābit ibn Qays or his cousin. But, she succeeded in making a deal with her master. The deal was that she would give him a certain amount of money against which he will release her. After making this arrangement, she came to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and sought financial assistance from him. He said: 'Shall I not tell you something much better than this? That I pay

on your behalf and marry you?' She agreed with pleasure. Thereupon, he paid the amount due on her behalf and married her. This resulted in something unusually benign. Hundreds of Sayyidah Juwayriyyah's people had by that time passed into the ownership of the noble Companions because all of them had come as prisoners. When the Companions found out that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had married her, all of them released their respective slaves out of deference to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم . Just imagine how elegant the propriety of their behaviour was, how genuine, how sublime. It was in view of their emotional realization that all these people have now become connected with the family of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in bonds of inlawship, that they simply could not have the audacity to keep them as slaves. So, they set all of them free. Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها says about this incident:

فلقد اعتق بتزويجه ايّاها مائة اهل بيت من بنى المصطلق فما اعلم امرأة اعظم بركة على قومها منها

Because of his marriage with Juwayriyah, one hundred families from Banū al-Musṭaliq became free. I know no other woman who proved to be greater in blessing for her people.

Sayyidah Umm Ḥabībah رضى الله عنها had become a Muslim in Makkah during the early days of Islam alongwith her husband. Later on, both husband and wife migrated to Ethiopia as members of a caravan of several men and women. After reaching there, her husband became a Christian and it so happened that a few days later, he died. The Holy Prophet ﷺ proposed to her through the good offices of Najāshī (Negus, Emperor of Ethiopia) which she accepted and it was in Ethiopia that the same Najāshī gave her in marriage to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم . It is interesting to note that Sayyidah Umm Ḥabībah رضى الله عنها was the daughter of Sayyidnā Abū Sufyān رضى الله عنه . He was, at that time, the leader of the group which regarded hostility to Islam as its main objective in life. They were always on the look-out for excuses to hurt Muslims and torture the Prophet of God. If they ever got the chance they would have not hesitated for a moment to eliminate him once and for all. When he found out about this marriage, he uttered the following words involuntarily: هوالفحل لا يجدع انفه literally: 'He is a man of valour. His nose cannot be cut off'. The sense

was that the Holy Prophet ﷺ is a man of honour. It is not easy to disgrace him. Here we are doing our best to disgrace him and there we see, right under our noses, that our daughter has become his wife.'

In short, this marriage proved to be a weapon of psychological warfare. The ambitions of the leader of the *kāfirs* against Muslims were watered down. That this marriage brought in its wake political gain for Islam and Muslims can hardly be denied in terms of the importance and need for it. This gain is certainly something God's far-sighted and wise Messenger had, in all likelihood, in sight.

Apart from the present summary view, those who have deeper access to the *Sīrah* would find many more elements of wisdom in his plurality of marriages. The treatise entitled, Kathratul-Azwāj-li-Ṣāḥibil-Mi'rāj by my venerated master, Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thānavī, is useful.

The details we have provided here are there to remove the golden trap laid out by atheists and orientalists. Though unfortunate, yet the truth is that this trap sucks in a lot of educated but ignorant Muslims. They go into the spider's web and do not return because they do not know the *sīrah* of the noble prophet and the history of Islam directly from their authentic sources. Their knowledge of everything Islamic comes from (anti-Islam) books written by the so-called orientalists.

Only one wife where injustice is likely

Let us now see what the Qur'ān says after allowing upto four wives. It says:

فَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ أَلَّا تَعْدِلُوا فَوَاحِدَةً أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ

But, if you fear that you will not maintain equity, then, (keep to) one woman, or a bondwoman you own - 4:3.

From here we find out that having more than one wife is permissible and appropriate only on condition that equality can be maintained among all wives as required under the Sharī'ah of Islam, and that the rights of all can be duly fulfilled. If one does not have the capability to discharge his obligations in this manner, the rule is to keep to only one wife. As stated earlier, the injustice of multiple marriages during *Jāhiliyyah* without any considerations of rights of wives had made a mockery of this field of human relationship. So, the

Qur'ānic command was: If you are unable to do perfect justice between wives, then restrict yourself to no more than one, or make do with a bondwoman you may own. At this point, please keep in mind that the Qur'ānic expression مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ which means 'a bondwoman one may have', has very special conditions under which such possession becomes possible, conditions which generally do not just exist these days. Therefore, the act of starting to live with someone out of wedlock, just by declaring that she was a 'bondwoman' owned by the person involved, as something allowed by the Sharī'ah of Islam, is *non sequitor* and patently *ḥarām* (unlawful). Any more details about it would simply be out of place here.

The outcome (to be seen as a whole) is that the Qur'ān has permitted having four wives in marriage which means that marriages entered into within this limit will be correct and permissible. But, under such a contingency, that of having more than one wife, it will be obligatory (*wājib*) to maintain justice and equality between them. Doing otherwise is a grave sin. So, anyone who thinks of having more than one wife should first think about all those factors and conditions around him and, more importantly, look into himself, introspect, weigh, deliberate and figure out realistically whether or not he has the ability, or the capability or quality to treat all of them equally and justly without causing the least infringement of their rights. If strong likelihood exists that one will not be able to come up to the standard and most probably will fail to maintain such justice and equality, then, having the audacity to go ahead and step into the bonds of more than one marriage is really a thoughtless plunge into a grave sin. One must stay away from doing something like this and, human condition being what it is, living with only one wife should be considered quite sufficient.

Speaking legally, if a person marries more than four women in a single offer and acceptance, the marriage shall be void *ab initio* because nobody has the right to have more than four wives. As far as marriages within the limit of four are concerned, they shall be deemed as valid marriages all right, but any shortcoming in treating wives equally and justly will be an act of grave sin. In addition to that, any infringement of a wife's rights can be challenged in an Islamic Court and the aggrieved wife can receive redress from there.

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has laid great emphasis on maintaining full equality and justice between all wives and he has given stern warnings against those who do otherwise. Above all, he has demonstrated the desirable ideal through his own conduct, reaching the outer limits of treating his wives equally even in matters in which equality is not mandatory.

In a *ḥadīth*, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said: 'Anyone who has two wives and he cannot fulfill their rights equally and justly, shall be raised on the Day of Doom in a condition that one of his shoulders will be drooping down.' (Mishkāt, p. 278)

We should, however, keep in mind that this equality of treatment is necessary in things which are within the control of man. For example, the coverage of personal expenses and parity in overnight stays. As for things out of man's control, such as the natural inclination of his heart which might tilt towards one of them, there is no accountability there for this is not a matter of choice. However, the binding condition is that this tilt should not affect matters which are within man's control. Our noble prophet, may Allah bless him for ever and ever, treated his venerated wives with full equality in everything within his control, yet he pleaded with his Lord:

اَللّٰهُمَّ هٰذَا قسمی فِيْمَا اَمْلِكُ فَلَا تلمنی فِيْمَا تَمْلِكُ وَلَا اَمْلِكُ

O Allah, this is my 'equalization' in what I control. So, do not hold me accountable in matters You control and I do not.

Obviously, something even an infallable Messenger of God is not able to do, how can someone else claim to have the ability to do it? Therefore, in another verse of the Holy Qur'ān, this 'matter out of man's control' has been mentioned in the following words:

وَلَنْ تَسْتَطِيْعُوْٓا اَنْ تَعْدِلُوْا بَيْنَ النِّسَآءِ

And you shall be unable to maintain perfect equality between the women - 4:129.

Here, it has been made clear that love and the tilt of the heart are something out of man's control. It is beyond man's power to achieve perfect equality of treatment in what comes from the territory of the heart. But, even this involuntary conduct has not been left totally

unchecked and unbalanced. In order to correct it, it was said: فَلَا تَمِيْلُوْا كُلَّ الْمَيْلِ (So, do not tilt, the full tilt). It means: If you love one of your wives more than the other, there is nothing you can do about it. But, total indifference and heedlessness towards the other wife is not permissible even under this situation. The justice and equality mentioned in the sentence فَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ اَلَّا تَعْدِلُوْا فَوَاحِدَةً (If you fear that you will not maintain equity, then {keep to} one woman) refers to the same justice in matters of choice and volition, any discrepancy in which is a great sin. So much so, that a person who sees the danger of his getting involved with this sin has been instructed not to marry more than one woman.

A doubt and its answer

Because some people have lost sight of details given above, they have fallen into a strange error. When they compare the verse under discussion, 4:3, and the verse quoted just a little earlier, 4:129, they are confused. They think: Here is this verse from Sūrah al-Nisā' which carries the command: 'If you fear that you will not maintain equity, then (keep to) one woman. Then, there is this second verse which says categorically that justice and equality (among wives) is just not possible. As a result, they doubt, having more than one wife should not be permissible. But, such people should ask themselves: If, through these verses, Allah Almighty aimed at putting a cap over more than one marriage, what need was there to go into all these details? Why would the Qur'ān say: فَانْكِحُوْا مَا طَابَ لَكُمْ مِّنَ النِّسَآءِ مَثْنٰى وَ ثُلٰثَ وَرُبٰعَ that is, 'marry women you like, in twos and threes and fours?' And then, what would be the meaning of saying: فَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ اَلَّا تَعْدِلُوْا that is, 'if you fear that you will not do justice' - for, in this situation, injustice is certain. How can we then explain the element of fear which would become meaningless?

In addition to this, the words and deeds of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and the noble Companions رضى الله عنهم اجمعين and their consistent practice prove the fact that having more than one wife (upto four) was never prevented in Islam. The truth of the matter is what has been stated earlier, that is, the first verse of Sūrah al-Nisā' talks about justice and equality in what man can do by choice while the second verse points out to man's inability to control lack of equal treatment when it comes to love and emotional inclination. Therefore, these two verses have no contradiction, nor does it prove that plurality of marriages is abso-

lutely forbidden.

Towards the end of the verse, it was said: ذٰلِكَ اَدْنٰٓى اَلَّا تَعُوْلُوْا (It will be closer to your not doing injustice). In this verse, the word اَدْنٰى ('adnā') has been derived from دُنُوٌّ (dunuwun) which means nearness and the other word لَاتَعُوْلُوْا (lā ta'ūlū) is from عَالَ يَعُوْلُ، مَالَ يَمِيْلُ which means inclination or tilt. Here it has been used in the sense of impermissible inclination culminating in injustice and wrong-doing.

It means 'what you have been told in this verse (that is, in absence of being unable to do justice, having only one wife or making do with one's bondwoman) is something which, if you elect to follow it, will help you in staying safe from doing any injustice and the chances of any additional oppression and transgression will be eliminated.

There is a doubt here: When a man has one wife, there will be just no chance of injustice. Why then, it was said, by adding the word, '*adnā*' that 'it will be closer to your not doing injustice', instead, the statement should have been something to the effect that it will make you totally safe from this injustice.

The answer is: The addition of the word, '*adnā* (closer) in the text is there to point out to all those people who would not hesitate in inflicting all sorts of injustices on even one wife. So, to block this source of injustice, the absence of more than one wife is not enough. In this situation, however, the likelihood does exist that the danger of injustice will decrease and you will come closer to justice. But, the complete deliverance from injustice and oppression will only be possible when the rights of one wife are totally and fully given and she is treated fairly and generously, forgiving her shortcomings and being patient with her crooked ways.

Verse 4

وَاٰتُوا النِّسَآءَ صَدُقٰتِهِنَّ نِحْلَةً ؕ فَاِنْ طِبْنَ لَكُمْ عَنْ شَیْءٍ مِّنْهُ
نَفْسًا فَكُلُوْهُ هَنِیْٓـًٔا مَّرِیْٓـًٔا ﴿۴﴾

And give the women their dower in good cheer. Then, if they give up some of it out of their own sweet will, you may have it to your advantage and pleasure. [4]

In the previous verse, the objective was to remove the injustice

done to women through the multiplicity of marriages. This verse takes up a particular right of women and aims to remove the injustice practiced in this matter. This is the right of *mahr* (dower).

Commentary

In pre-Islam Arabia, injustices in the payment of dower took many forms:

1. To begin with, the dower which was the right of the girl being given in marriage, was not given to her. Instead, the dower was taken by the guardians of the girl directly from the husband - rank injustice indeed. To get rid of this practice, the Holy Qur'ān said: وَاٰتُوا النِّسَآءَ صَدُقٰتِهِنَّ (and give the women their dower). This command is addressed to the husbands so that they themselves give their wives their dowers and not give these to others. Also addressed here are the guardians of the girls with the instruction that they should, in case they happen to receive the dower meant for the girls, give it straight to the girls and make sure that they themselves do nothing to put the money in personal use without the permission of the girls.

2. Another injustice related to the attitude of the giver of the dower. If someone had to pay it and realised that there was no way out, he would be very sour and unhappy and do it unwillingly as if he was paying a penalty. This injustice was removed through the use of the word, نِحْلَةً : *niḥlah,* since *niḥlah* in Arabic usage means 'giving something cheerfully'.

So, the verse here teaches that the dower of women is their right which must be fulfilled as a matter of obligation. Since, as a rule, all obligatory rights must be discharged cheerfully, so it should be in the case of dower, that is, 'give in good cheer'.

3. Yet another injustice regarding the payment of dower was that many husbands, taking advantage of the powerlessness of the wife, would use pressure and make them forgo and forgive their dower. This act of theirs hardly brought forth real forgiving of the standing right, but they, on their part, went about free of the concern for dower which, according to their thinking, was 'forgiven'.

To eradicate this injustice, it was said in the verse: فَاِنْ طِبْنَ لَكُمْ عَنْ شَيْءٍ مِّنْهُ نَفْسًا فَكُلُوْهُ هَنِيْٓــًٔـا مَّرِيْٓــًٔـا . It means: 'if these women give up some of it out of their

own sweet will, you may have it to your advantage and pleasure.'

The point is that exacting forgiveness by pressure or compulsion from an unwilling wife is an exercise in futility. Nothing gets forgiven in this manner. But, should it be that they themselves elect, out of their free choice and will, in its most genuine sense, to forgo or forgive a part of the dower, or return it to you after they had already taken it, then, this is permissible for the husbands, and correct as well.

Surely, these injustices which the Holy Qur'ān aims to remove in this verse prevailed at peak during *Jāhiliyyah*. But, very regretably, some of these practices of pre-Islam days still survive among Muslims. There are tribes and geographical areas where one or the other such injustice is not difficult to find. All Muslims must stay away from being a party to such injustices.

The restriction of "out of their own sweet will" placed in this verse, has a secret of its own. The truth of the matter is that, according to the standard rule of Islamic Sharī'ah, even the smallest portion of what belongs to someone is not lawful for someone else unless permitted gladly. The standard rule was set by the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم when he said:

اَلَا لَا تَظْلِمُوْا ، اَلَا لَا يَحِلُّ مَالُ امْرِءٍ اِلَّا بِطِيْبِ نَفْسٍ مِّنْهُ (مشکوۃ شریف ص ٢٥٥)

Beware, do no injustice. Remember, a person's property is not lawful (for the other) unless it be through his sweet will. (Mishkāt, p. 255)

This is a great principle from which many details issue forth.

Even in our own times, there are women who very much doubt that they are going to get their dower. They think asking for it is not going to please anybody, nor the refusal to forgive will make anyone any happier. So, like it or not, they just forget and forgo. This kind of forgiveness is not trustworthy. My respected teacher, Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thānavī used to say that the real touchstone of forgiving gladly is to first hand over the amount of the dower in the hands of the wife, as its owner, who may later give it to the husband out of her own sweet will without any pressure. This attitude of giving gladly should also be practiced as the operating principle in the inheritance of sisters and wives. It is not too uncommon that, following the death of the mother

or father, sons take over the whole property and do not give the girls their share. If the usurpers were bothered by moral or religious considerations in some degree, the most they would do is to go and excuse themselves before their sisters. Since they know that they are not going to get their share under this situation anyway, they simply go along and forgive against their will. In addition to this, the share belonging to the surviving wife is not given to her after the death of the father. Particularly, a step mother just does not get hers. All this amounts to open usurping of rights. The only exception is that, should anyone forgive gladly, that forgiveness is possible, and valid.

Ḥaḍrat Thānavī also pointed out that the text is talking about the willingness of the whole human self and not simply the happiness of the heart which alone is not enough to make someone's property lawful for the other. People who give money in bribes, or interest, do so after a good deal of calculations, and many apparent gains, but this is not giving gladly, and not trustworthy either. If such people were to probe their conscience and come out with the truth, the truth would be that their self would flatly refuse to agree to such giving. This is why good cheer and sweet will have been given the deciding role.

If donations are sought for mosques, religious schools or for any other need, there too it is necessary to see that the giver is doing it freely and gladly. If a donation is given under pressure from anyone having tribal, social or legal authority or influence, without the free choice and will and pleasure of the giver, then, it is not lawful to accept and use this donation. Instead, it would be returned to the giver.

As for the word صَدُقَاتِ : *ṣaduqāt* appearing in the verse, it is the plural form of *ṣaduqah*. The words, *ṣaduqah* and *ṣudāq* signify the dower of women. In Mirqāt Sharḥ Mishkāt, Mullā 'Alī Qārī writes: وَسُمِّيَ بِهِ لِأَنَّهُ يظهر به صدق ميل الرجل الى المرأة . It means that dower is referred to as *ṣaduqah* or *ṣudāq* because its root, *ṣadaqa* (صدق) signifies truth. Since dower too shows the true attitude of the husband towards his wife, the congruity was good enough to let dower be called *ṣudāq* or *ṣaduqah*.

The words, هَنِيْٓـًٔا : *hanī'an* and مَرِيْٓـًٔا : *marī'an* appearing at the end of the verse are attributive modifiers. The word, *hanī'an* (from *han'ā* and *hanū'a* and *hanī'ā*) means something received without having to go

through labour and pain. When this refers to food, it means good food which is eaten and digested easily and becomes a healthy part of the human body.

The word, *marī'an* (from *mara'ā*: to be wholesome) is also used in the same sense and is very close to each other. For this reason, some translators have made one word, in the sense of 'wholesome', stand for both.

Verses 5 - 6

وَلَا تُؤْتُوا السُّفَهَآءَ اَمْوَالَكُمُ الَّتِىْ جَعَلَ اللّٰهُ لَكُمْ قِيٰمًا
وَّارْزُقُوْهُمْ فِيْهَا وَاكْسُوْهُمْ وَقُوْلُوْا لَهُمْ قَوْلًا مَّعْرُوْفًا ﴿٥﴾
وَابْتَلُوا الْيَتٰمٰى حَتّٰٓى اِذَا بَلَغُوا النِّكَاحَ ۚ فَاِنْ اٰنَسْتُمْ مِّنْهُمْ
رُشْدًا فَادْفَعُوْٓا اِلَيْهِمْ اَمْوَالَهُمْ ۚ وَلَا تَاْكُلُوْهَآ اِسْرَافًا وَّبِدَارًا اَنْ
يَّكْبَرُوْا ۭ وَمَنْ كَانَ غَنِيًّا فَلْيَسْتَعْفِفْ ۚ وَمَنْ كَانَ فَقِيْرًا فَلْيَاْكُلْ
بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ ۭ فَاِذَا دَفَعْتُمْ اِلَيْهِمْ اَمْوَالَهُمْ فَاَشْهِدُوْا عَلَيْهِمْ ۭ
وَكَفٰى بِاللّٰهِ حَسِيْبًا ﴿٦﴾

And do not give the feeble-minded your property which Allah has made a means of support for you, and do feed them out of it, and clothe them, and speak to them in fair words as due. [5]

And test the orphans until they reach a marriageable age then, if you perceive in them proper understanding, hand over to them their property. And do not consume it extravagantly and hastily lest they should grow up. And whoever is rich he should abstain and whoever is poor he should consume in fairness. So, when you hand over to them their property, have witnesses upon them. And Allah is sufficient for reckoning. [6]

Sequence

The injunction to give orphans their property, and the women, their dower, has appeared in previous verses. This may lead one to think that the property of the orphans and women should under all

conditions, be given to them, even if they cannot handle relevant transactions and are incapable of protecting their property interests. To remove this misunderstanding, it has been said in these verses that properties should not be handed over to the feeble-minded. Instead, they should be watched and tested to determine the age and time when they exhibit the ability to protect their property and the discernment of spending out of it, it is then that their property should be handed over to them.

Commentary

Do protect what you own

These verses affirm the role of property in man's economic effort which gives him the desire to protect it. Then, at the same time, the general weakness shown in the protection of properties has been corrected. There are people who, giving in to natural love, hand over properties to inexperienced minor children and ill-informed women which usually results in the wastage of the property and the quick poverty which follows in its wake.

Do not hand over properties to the feeble-minded

The most revered exegete of the Holy Qur'ān, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ says: 'The guidance the Holy Qur'ān gives in this verse is: Do not, by handing over all your property to feeble-minded children and women, become dependent on them. Since Allah Almighty has made you the guardian and the manager, you should, rather, hold the property in your safe custody and keep spending from it as necessary in order to feed and clothe them. And should they, even then, demand to take possession of the property, explain to them honestly, fairly and reasonably in a way which neither breaks their heart nor causes the property to be wasted. For instance, say something like:' All this is there for you. Just grow up a little more and you will have it all.'

Based on this *tafsīr* of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ, the sense of the verse covers all women, children and others who are feeble-minded and inexperienced, to whom it is dangerous to hand over properties since it may result in their loss, irrespective of the fact that they may be one's own children, or orphans, or the fact be that the property may belong to such children and orphans themselves, or to

the guardians. The same *tafsīr* has been reported from Sayyidnā Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī رضى الله عنه and the renowned *mufassir*, al-Ṭabarī has also adopted the same view.

The context of the earlier and later verses may, though, lead one to particularize this injunction too with orphaned children, yet, the generality of words remains there as such and which includes all children, orphans and non-orphans. And perhaps, the form of address in *'amwālukum'* (your properties) may have the special wisdom that it is inclusive of the properties of the guardians as well as that of the orphans. The suggestion is that the properties of the orphans, until such time that they become mature and discerning, remain under the guardian's safe custody and responsibility as if these properties, so to say, were like their own. It will be recalled that the fact of the matter - that the properties of the orphans have to be given only to them - has been made very clear in verse 2 : وَاٰتُوا الْيَتٰمٰٓى اَمْوَالَهُمْ (And give the orphans their property). After this, there remains no reason for any doubt.

Protecting property is necessary. Wasting it is a sin. A person killed while defending his property is a *shahīd* (martyr). This is similar to being killed in defence of one's life which makes one deserving of the great reward of *shahādah* (martyrdom). The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said:

مَنْ قُتِلَ دُوْنَ مَالِهٖ فَهُوَ شَهِيْدٌ

> Whosoever is killed while protecting his property is a *shahīd* (that is, he is counted among Muslim martyrs in terms of Divine reward). (Bukhārī, v.1, p. 337 - Muslim, v.1, p.81)

He has also said:

نعما بالمال الصالح للرجل الصالح

> For a good man, his good and clean property is the best asset of his life. (Mishkāt, p. 326)

Yet another saying of his is:

لَابَأْسَ بِالْغِنٰى لِمَنِ اتَّقَى اللّٰهَ عَزَّوَجَلَّ

> Being rich is not harmful for one who fears Allah, the Mighty, the Exalted. (Mishkāt, p. 491)

The last two *aḥādīth* quoted above tell us that the wealth possessed by a righteous and God-fearing person is not harmful for him because such a person, by virtue of being God-fearing, will abstain from spending it in what is sinful. The anti-wealth teachings of many Muslim saints and mystics apply to none but those who spend their lustily-earned wealth for sinful purposes and thus go on to make it the cause of their punishment in the Hereafter. Also, since man is naturally inclined to abandon, once he is rich, all concerns of moderation in his spendings, as well as the very anxiety to see that he stays safe against other sins - that is why staying away from wealth has been considered desirable. God bless our earlier people; they would earn, more or less, as needed, were grateful to Allah and ended up being happy that they have succeeded in saving their skins from being ultimately 'audited' for the whats and hows and whereas of spending their wealth, if they had it. But, in our time, people do not care much about matters of faith; they are more attracted to material things; they are all too ready to abandon their faith at the slightest provocation, not because there is some discomfort involved. Rather, they would do that lest they go against fragile fashion, or trend, or some borrowed norm of contemporary society. Therefore, it is important that people earn lawfully and conserve their earnings. For such people, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said:

كَادَ الْفَقْرُ اَنْ يَّكُوْنَ كُفْرًا

Poverty can take one to the point of being a disbeliever. (Mishkāt, p. 439)

Sayyidnā Sufyān al-Thawrī رضى الله عنه elaborates this by saying:

كان المال فيما مضى يكره، فاما اليوم فهو ترس المؤمن

Previously, owning and keeping wealth was not considered good, but today, this wealth is a shield of the true Muslim.

He has also said:

مَنْ كَانَ فِيْ يَدِهٖ مِنْ هٰذِهٖ شَيْئًا فَلْيُصْلِحْهُ، فَاِنَّهٗ زَمَانٌ اِنِ احْتَاجَ كَانَ اَوَّلَ من يبذل دِيْنَهٗ

Whoever has any of this (wealth) in his hands should make it serve him well for these are times when, in the event of some

need, one is likely to first 'spend' his faith in order to take care of that need. (i.e. the desire to fulfill one's need has become more important than the obligation to follow one's faith) (Mishkāt, p.491)

The injunction to test the ability and understanding of minors

Once we know from verse 5 that minors should not be entrusted with properties until such time that their ability to discern and decide stands proved, the injunctions to educate and test such children to determine their ability follow in the next verse (6).

Verse 6: وَابْتَلُوا الْيَتٰمٰى حَتّٰٓى إِذَا بَلَغُوا النِّكَاحَ translated as 'and test the orphans until they reach marriageable age;' means that children, well before they become pubert and marriageable, should be tested through small assignments of buying and selling in order to determine their ability to conduct themselves in transactions on their own. This process of practical experimentation should continue right through upto the age of marriageability, that is, when they become pubert and mature. This is the time of special assessment. Now it should be determined if they have become smart and self-reliant in their affairs. Once this is sensed as 'dependable', it is time to hand over their property to them.

In short, given the nature of children and the factors involved in the growth of reason and intelligence among them, they have been divided in three stages. One: minority (before puberty). Two: After puberty. Three: After self-reliance, and discretion in conducting personal affairs (*Rushd* as opposed to *Safāhah*). During the first stage, the guardians of children have been instructed to educate and train them by providing for them hands-on experience, that is, let them become smarter by conducting small dealings in buying and selling on their own. The expression: وَابْتَلُوا الْيَتٰمٰى (and test the orphans) in this verse means exactly this. It is from here that Imām Abū Ḥanīfah رحمة الله عليه has deduced the ruling that the transactions of buying and selling entered into by minor children with the permission of their guardian are sound, valid and operative.

In accordance with the other injunction, when children become mature, pubert and marriageable, the guardian should check up their state of growth at that stage in terms of experience, intelligence and dealings, and once it becomes clear that they understand their profit

and loss and handle their affairs and dealings in a satisfactory manner, their property should be handed over to them.

The Age of Maturity

Along with the injunction of maturity (*bulūgh*) in this verse, the Holy Qur'ān has also answered the question as to the 'age' when a child would be taken as mature (*bāligh*) by saying: إِذَا بَلَغُوا النِّكَاحَ translated as 'until they reach marriageability'. Here, it has been indicated that real maturity is not tied up with any particular count of years. Rather, it depends on particular indicators and signs experienced by adults entering the threshold of adulthood. When, in terms of these indicators and signs, they would be regarded fit to marry, they would be considered mature, even if their age does not exceed thirteen or fourteen years. But, should it be that such signs of maturity just do not show up in some child, he shall be considered mature in terms of age, a position in which Muslim jurists vary. Some fix eighteen years for boys and seventeen for girls; some others have fixed fifteen years for both. With the *Ḥanafiyyah*, the *fatwā* is on the position that the boy and the girl shall both be considered mature under the Islamic law after they have completed their fifteenth year. irrespective of whether or not signs of maturity are found.

The Perception of Proper Understanding : How to find it? An Explanation of 'آنَسْتُمْ مِّنْهُمْ رُشْدًا'

The injunction of the Qur'ān is: 'then, if you perceive in them proper understanding, hand over to them their property.' Now, what is the time of this 'proper understanding' (*rushd*)? The Holy Qur'ān has not elaborated on this final limit of time. Therefore, some Muslim jurists leaned towards favouring the view that the properties of children should not be handed over to them until it has been determined that they do have full and proper understanding. Instead, these will stay under the safe custody of the guardian as usual, even if this state of affairs continues for the rest of life.

But, in accordance with the verification of the issue by Imām Abū Ḥanīfah رحمه الله , at this point the absence of 'proper understanding' refers to the state affected by childhood. Within ten years after maturity, the effect of childhood is gone. So, there are fifteen years as the age of maturity (*bulūgh*) and ten years as the age of proper under-

standing (*rushd*). Once these 25 years are reached, such proper understanding is most likely to be achieved; something which was not possible due to the barriers of childhood, and later, younger years. Then, it should be noted that the Holy Qur'ān uses the word, '*rushdan*' in its indefinite form whereby it is suggesting that full understanding and perfect sense are not absolute conditions. A reasonable measure of understanding is also sufficient for this purpose on the basis of which their properties could be given to them. Therefore, even if perfect understanding has not been achieved despite the long wait of twenty five years, even then, their properties will be handed over to them. As far as perfect understanding and wisdom is concerned, there are people who do not get to achieve these throughout their entire lives. They always remain simple, innocent and rather shy and slow in conducting their practical dealings. They will not be deprived of their properties because of this. However, should there be someone totally insane, he will be governed by a separate rule since such a person always remains in the category of immature children. His property will never be handed over to him until his insanity disappears, even if his entire life were to pass in insanity.

The Prohibition of Undue Spending from the Property of Orphans

As we know, the verse instructs that the property of the orphans should not be handed over to them until a certain degree of understanding and experience is perceived in them. Naturally, for this purpose, one will have to wait for some more time. In that case, it was probable that the guardian of the orphan could commit an excess against the interests of the orphan. So, the verse goes on to say:

وَلَا تَأْكُلُوْهَآ اِسْرَافًا وَّبِدَارًا اَنْ يَّكْبَرُوْا

And do not consume it extravagantly and hastily lest they should grow up.

Here, the guardians of the orphans have been prevented from two things: Firstly, from spending out of their property extravagantly, that is, from spending over and above normal needs; and secondly, from starting to spend out from their property way before the need to do so, as if in a hurry, thinking of the near future when their wards would grow up and their property would have to be given to them and the

guardian's control will be all over.

The orphan's guardian, if needy, can take out some of his expenses from the orphan's property

Does a person, who spends his time and labour in the upbringing of an orphan and is devoted to the protection of his property, have the right to take an honorarium for his services from the property of the orphan? The rule is given towards the later part of the verse when it is said: وَمَنْ كَانَ غَنِيًّا فَلْيَسْتَعْفِفْ (And whoever is rich he should abstain). It means that a person who is need-free as he can take care of his needs through some other means, then, he should not take any payment for his services from the property of the orphan, because this service is an obligation on him. Receiving payment for it is not permissible. Then, it was said: وَمَنْ كَانَ فَقِيرًا فَلْيَأْكُلْ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ (and whoever is poor he should consume in fairness). It means that the guardian of an orphan who is poor and needy and has no other source of earning his livelihood, he can consume a reasonable amount from the property of the orphans for his sustenance in a measure that is just about right to cover his basic needs.

Having witnesses while handing over property

The verse concludes with: فَإِذَا دَفَعْتُمْ إِلَيْهِمْ أَمْوَالَهُمْ فَأَشْهِدُوا عَلَيْهِمْ ، وَكَفَىٰ بِاللَّهِ حَسِيبًا : It means: 'when you hand over to them their property (after having gone through the period of test and trial), have (some reliable and pious people as) witnesses upon them (so that there is no dispute later). And (remember that) Allah is sufficient for reckoning (for He has a count of everything within His sight).

Payment for services rendered to country, community and *Awqāf*

The contextual extension of the verse yields an important juristic rule and principle. It concerns people who supervise *Awqāf* (religious endowments, trusts and estates) or manage mosques and religious schools or head institutions of Muslim states or hold charge of similar other services rendered for the country and community, services the rendering of which is known in Islamic terminology as *farḍ 'ala l'kifāyah* (an obligation which, if discharged by some, will absolve others). For these gentlemen too, the superior and more meritorious conduct is - of course, if they have sufficient assets to take care of the

necessary expenses needed to maintain their family - that they should not take anything from these institutions or from the public exchequer of the government. But, should it be that they do not have funds of their own to sustain themselves and they devote their earning time to such service-oriented activities, then, they have the right to take such funds from these institutions in proportion to their need. Please do notice the condition which is: 'in proportion to need'. A lot of people fix an insignificant monthly emolument shown on paper to satisfy legal requirements but they go on spending by various other means on their person and on their family recklessly, much much beyond it. There is just no remedy for this lack of caution except the fear of Allah. The last words of the verse: وَكَفٰى بِاللّٰهِ حَسِيبًا (and Allah is sufficient for reckoning) invite everyone, masses or classes, to realize that the man who stays untouched by unlawful acquisitions will be the man who fears the final accounting by Allah. وبالله التوفيق : And the ability to do so comes from Allah.

Verses 7 - 10

لِلرِّجَالِ نَصِيبٌ مِّمَّا تَرَكَ الْوَالِدٰنِ وَالْأَقْرَبُونَ ص وَلِلنِّسَاءِ نَصِيبٌ
مِّمَّا تَرَكَ الْوَالِدٰنِ وَالْأَقْرَبُونَ مِمَّا قَلَّ مِنْهُ أَوْ كَثُرَ ط نَصِيبًا
مَّفْرُوضًا ﴿٧﴾ وَإِذَا حَضَرَ الْقِسْمَةَ أُولُوا الْقُرْبٰى وَالْيَتٰمٰى
وَالْمَسٰكِينُ فَارْزُقُوهُمْ مِّنْهُ وَقُولُوا لَهُمْ قَوْلًا مَّعْرُوفًا ﴿٨﴾
وَلْيَخْشَ الَّذِينَ لَوْ تَرَكُوا مِنْ خَلْفِهِمْ ذُرِّيَّةً ضِعٰفًا خَافُوا عَلَيْهِمْ ص
فَلْيَتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَلْيَقُولُوا قَوْلًا سَدِيدًا ﴿٩﴾ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَأْكُلُونَ
أَمْوَالَ الْيَتٰمٰى ظُلْمًا إِنَّمَا يَأْكُلُونَ فِي بُطُونِهِمْ نَارًا ط وَسَيَصْلَوْنَ
سَعِيرًا ﴿١٠﴾

For men there is a share in what the parents and the nearest of kin have left. And for women there is a share in what the parents and the nearest of kin have left, be it small or large - a determined share. [7]

And if the kins and the orphans and the needy are present at the time of distribution, give them some of it

and speak to them in fair words. [8]

And those people should be fearful who, if they leave behind some helpless children, would remain anxious for them. So, they should fear Allah and say what is right. [9]

Surely, those who eat up the property of the orphans unjustly, they only eat fire into their bellies, and soon they shall enter a blazing Hell. [10]

Right from the opening of Sūrah Al-Nisā', the theme of universal human rights, particularly those relating to family life, has been appearing regularly. Verses before those dealt with the rights of orphans. The four verses here also take up particular rights of women and orphans which relate to inheritance.

The first verse (7) refutes the custom of *Jāhiliyyah* under which women were just not allowed to inherit. The verse declares their entitlement to their share as fixed by Islamic law and strictly forbids any attempt to decrease their due right. Since the subject concerned those who had a determined share in inheritance, and it is not uncommon that when such distribution is being made, some persons from among the poor and the orphans do make their appearance on the occasion, therefore the second verse (8) lays down the rule that they should be treated benignly. But, this command is not obligatory; it is, rather, commendatory.

The third and fourth verses (9, 10) also emphasize the importance of injunctions relating to orphans.

Commentary

The right to inherit from parents and other nearest of kin

Before Islam, orphans and women, the weaker links in the human chain, had been victims of all sorts of injustice. To begin with, none of their rights were recognized as such. Even if one of these was conceded, who could wrest it from men and hope to hold it safe? Such power and authority did not exist.

The breakthrough came when Islam championed their cause, legalized their rights and instituted safeguards to see that these stay secure against infringements. All this happened in the background when nations around the world had allowed these two weaker units of

human society to remain deprived of their natural and obligatory rights. Such was the state of the law of inheritance. The pre-Islam Arabs seemed to have lived by the the very principle that the one deserving of inheritance is the one who rides a horse, fights against enemies and collects battle spoils. (Ruḥ al-Ma'ānī), v. 4, p. 21). As quite obvious, women and children could not live by this principle. So, according to their principle of inheritance, only a young and adult boy could become the inheritor. A girl was absolutely out of consideration for this purpose, irrespective of whether she was major or minor. And a boy too, if minor and immature, would not be deserving of inheritance.

There was an incident during the blessed time of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم when a Companion, Sayyidnā Aws ibn Thābit رضى الله عنه died. He left behind two daughters, a minor boy and his wife as the inheritors. But, very much like the old Arab custom, two of his cousins from the father's side came and took the whole property in their possession and just gave nothing to anyone from among the children and wife of their deceased brother. This may have been so because, according to their customary practice, a woman was absolutely out of the pale of inheritors, major or minor. This conveniently ruled out the wife and the two daughters. As far as the boy was concerned, he was a minor and, therefore, he too was excluded from inheriting anything. As a result, the two paternal cousins became the inheritors of the whole property.

Inspite of what happened, the widow of Sayyidnā Aws ibn Thābit رضى الله عنه still wanted that these cousins who had taken possession of the entire property left by her deceased husband might as well marry the two orphaned daughters so that she is relieved of the concern for their marriage. But, as they did not accept this proposal too, she went to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and narrated to him her sad story and explained the destitution of her children. Since, by that time, the 'verse of inheritance' was yet to be revealed in the Holy Qur'ān, the noble Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم withheld his response. His heart was at peace; he was confident that this unjust practice will be removed through Divine revelation. Thereupon, the following verse was revealed:

لِلرِّجَالِ نَصِيبٌ مِّمَّا تَرَكَ الْوَالِدٰنِ وَالْاَقْرَبُوْنَ وَلِلنِّسَآءِ نَصِيبٌ مِّمَّا تَرَكَ الْوَالِدٰنِ
وَالْاَقْرَبُوْنَ مِمَّا قَلَّ مِنْهُ اَوْكَثُرَ نَصِيبًا مَّفْرُوْضًا

For men there is a share in what the parents and the nearest of kin have left. And for women there is a share in what the parents and the nearest of kin have left, be it small or large - a determined share.

After that came the second verse of inheritance which contains the details of shares. The second section of this Sūrah comprises these details. So, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم followed the injunctions of the Qur'ān, gave the wife the one-eight of the total inheritance and distributed the rest of the property over the son and the daughters of the deceased in a way that the half of it went to the boy and the remaining half was shared equally by the two girls; and the cousins, since they were not the nearest of kin as compared to children, were excluded. (Ruḥ al-Ma'ānī)

The rule of inheritance

This verse lays down the rule relating to the law of inheritance as a corollary to some of its injunctions, which is: مِّمَّا تَرَكَ الْوَالِدٰنِ وَالْاَقْرَبُوْنَ (... in what the parents and the nearest of kin have left.) The two words, '*al-wālidān*' (the parents) and '*al-aqrabūn*' (the nearest of kin) spell out two basic principles of inheritance. The first one is the bond of birth which exists between children and their father and mother and which has been described through '*al-wālidān*.' The second one is the general kinship which is the sense of the word, '*al-aqrabūn*'. According to the correct interpretation, the word, '*al-aqrabūn*' covers all kinds of family relationships. This may be the mutual bond of birth as in children and their parents; or, it may be of the other kind as in general family relationships; or, these may be relations established through marital connection. The word, '*al-aqrabūn*' covers all, but parents were set apart specially because of their importance. Then, this word has also established another principle of inheritance, that is, the mere fact of kinship is not enough for a claim on inheritance. Rather, it is necessary that the heir is nearest in kinship, for - if the degree of nearness or closeness were not made the standard condition - the inheritance of every deceased person would have to be, of necessity, distributed over the entire human population of this wide world. The reason is simple

to understand because everyone is the offspring of one father and mother, Adam and Eve, peace be on them. Be it close or not so close, there does exist some sort of mutual relationship in everyone. When it comes to distribution of inheritance, it is, to begin with, beyond the realm of possibility. However, speaking academically, if such an arrangement was somehow made, the resulting distribution of property would be something like one insignificant particle for each which will be no good for anyone. So, it was necessary that, given the pivotal position of kinship in the matter of inheritance, the principle should be: If choice has to be made from a collection of different relatives, then, the nearest of kin should be preferred over the farther ones and, in the presence of the nearest, the farthest should not be given a share. However, if there are relatives who are all declared to be the nearest at the same time, even if the nature of nearness in them be different, then, all of them will deserve a share in the inheritance as the father and mother alongwith children, or wife etc., for they all are the nearest, though the nature of nearness differs.

In addition to that, this very word, '*al-aqrabūn*' establishes that the way men are sharers in inheritance, so are women and children, who too cannot be deprived of this right, for kinship of children, parents or any others, is the same in a boy and girl as far as the fact of being related is concerned. A boy is born to his parents and so is a girl, who is born to them. When the right to inherit depends on being related, there is no sense in depriving a small child or a girl.

Another point about the style of the Holy Qur'ān is worth noticing here. Instead of mentioning the entitlement of women in a separate sentence, the Holy Qur'ān could have easily merged it with the entitlement of men in a single sentence, by saying, "For men and women both there is a share...." But the Holy Qur'ān has elected to mention the entitlement of both sexes in two separate independent sentences, even though it seems to be a repetition. This is to emphasize the fact that the right of women in inheritance is quite independent and is as important as the right of men.

Furthermore, this very word, '*al-aqrabūn*' also tells us that the distribution of property left behind is not based on the criterion of need; it is, rather, based on the criterion of nearness in kinship. There-

fore, it is not necessary that the one more needy among the relatives should be the one more deserving of a share in inheritance. On the contrary, the one nearest in kinship to the deceased will be the one more deserving of a share in the inheritance as compared to the farther - even though, the farther may be poorer and more needy. If we set aside the principle of nearness in kinship and use the need or the beneficial effects for some relatives as the criterion, it can neither turn into a rule nor can it take the form of a settled and solid law, because any criterion, other than nearness in kinship, will inevitably be temporary as based on opinion because poverty and need or usefulness are not permanent. Conditions change. Levels change. Under such conditions, there will appear a host of claimants and those responsible for settlement would have a hard time in arriving at decision.

The problem of an orphaned grandson's inheritance

If this Qur'ānic principle is understood clearly, the problem of an orphaned grandson's inheritance - which has been made to look like a disputed issue for no sound reason - resolves itself automatically on the basis of a categorical decision. In other words, if an orphaned grandson is more needy as compared to the son, but, in accordance with the law of '*al-aqrabūn*' (the nearest in kinship), he cannot claim a share in the inheritance because he is not 'the nearest' in the presence of the son, other arrangements have been made to take care of his needs. One such arrangement appears in the next verse.

This religious position has been opposed by none but some of the contemporary, westernized modernists. Other than these, the entire Muslim *Ummah* has been holding the belief, as clarified by the Qur'ān and the Ḥadīth, that the grandson will not inherit in the presence of a son of the deceased, irrespective of whether his father is dead or alive.

The right of inheritance is operative in everything owned by the deceased

The phrase مِمَّا قَلَّ مِنْهُ اَوْ كَثُرَ (be it small or large) in this verse corrects another custom practiced by some ignorant people where some things or properties were assigned to special inheritors. For example, a horse or some weapon like a sword could only be inherited by young males as a matter of right. Others were deprived of these. The instruction given by the Holy Qur'ān makes it very clear that in everything under the

ownership of the deceased, be it big or small, there is a standing right of all inheritors. It is not permissible for any inheritor to keep anything special for himself before the total inheritance has been formally distributed according to rules.

Fixed shares in inheritance have been determined by Allah

The last phrase نَصِيبًا مَّفْرُوضًا (a determined share) in verse 7 is to stress that different shares fixed for different inheritors in the Holy Qur'ān have been determined as such by Allah Almighty. Nobody has any right to add or delete or change or transpose any of these by personal opinion or analogical deduction.

Inheritance is a compulsory transfer of ownership

This particular word, مَّفْرُوضًا (*mafrūḍan:* determined) throws light on yet another principle, that is, the ownership which passes on to inheritors through the law of inheritance is automatic and compulsory. It does not require the acceptance or consent of the inheritor nor is it necessary that he be satisfied with it. The fact is that, even if he were to make a clear declaration that he will not take his share, still then, he is the owner of his share in the sight of the Shari'ah. But, if he does not want to keep his share, he may, after having become the owner, gift it to somebody or sell it or distribute it, in accordance with the rules of Sharī'ah.

A sign of goodwill to other relatives

It is likely that there are some relatives of the deceased who cannot receive a share from his inheritance according to the rules of Shari'ah. At the same time, it is obvious that everyone does not know the details of the system of share distribution. Generally, every relative would like to have some share out of the inheritance. Therefore, relatives who have been excluded under the provisions of the Islamic law of inheritance may feel disappointed at the time of the distribution of inheritance, specially so when they are physically present at that time, and more so when there are some orphans and poor and needy among them. A scenario in which other relatives are walking away with their respective shares while they simply look on is terrible.

Now look at the beauty and delicacy of the Qur'ānic arrangement of things. On the one hand, there is the just rule offered by the Qur'ān itself - that the nearer in kinship shall exclude the farther. On the

other hand, there is that wonderful concern for the disappointment of 'the excluded farther'. Therefore, a regular verse (8) has been devoted to carry the necessary instruction as to how this situation will be handled:

وَاِذَا حَضَرَ الْقِسْمَةَ اُولُوا الْقُرْبٰى وَالْيَتٰمٰى وَالْمَسٰكِيْنُ فَارْزُقُوْهُمْ مِّنْهُ وَقُوْلُوْا لَهُمْ قَوْلًا مَّعْرُوْفًا

It means that distant relatives, orphans and the needy who are to be excluded from having a share in the inheritance and who, nevertheless, show up at the time of its distribution, then, it is the moral obligation of those who get a share in the inheritance that they voluntarily give them some of it, which would become an act of charity for them, and certainly, a modality of reward from Allah. At a time like this, when wealth and property are coming to them, without their having made any effort, simply through the mercy of Allah Almighty - then, their own hearts should beat with the urge to give whatever they can, in the way of Allah, an example of which appears in another verse (Al-An'ām: 6:141) cited below:

كُلُوْا مِنْ ثَمَرِهٖٓ اِذَآ اَثْمَرَ وَاٰتُوْا حَقَّهٗ يَوْمَ حَصَادِهٖ

> That is, eat the fruit of your farm when it bears fruit and on the day of its harvesting give away the due (of the poor and the needy) on it.

In short, the fact that distant kindred, orphans and the needy assemble at the time of the distribution of inheritance should be no cause of irritation. On the contrary one should be grateful to Allah that He has bestowed on him something he did not work for, therefore, it will be good to give away a part from it as a token of gratitude. In fact, one should take it as a God-sent opportunity to let these people have a little from what they have received which would certainly compensate the sense of deprivation faced by these people. Incidentally, this includes and covers the grandson of the deceased who was excluded from the inheritance.

His uncles and paternal aunts should actually be pleased to give him something each from their respective shares.

The statement at the end of the verse (8): وَقُوْلُوْا لَهُمْ قَوْلًا مَّعْرُوْفًا (and speak

to them in fair words) gives the guideline in case these people are not satisfied with the manner and quantum of what they get but start demanding a share equal to that of everybody else, then, this demand being unjust and contrary to Sharī'ah, there is no way to satisfy it, however, instead of behaving to them in a crude manner which may hurt their feelings, the actual rules of Sharī'ah should be explained to them in a polite manner. They can be told that they do not have a share in the inheritance as stipulated by the rule of Islamic law and that which has been given to them has been given to them as a gift. At this point, one should make sure that the gift or donation given to such people does not come out of the total property inherited. Here it is important that the donation should be made by adult inheritors present, from their respective shares. Such gifts from the shares of the minor and the absent are not allowed in Sharī'ah.

Fear Allah while distributing inheritance

The third verse (9) addresses Muslims in general exhorting them to make it certain that the inheritance of the deceased reaches his children fully and fairly. They must abstain from any mode of action which may affect the share of the children adversely. The general sense of the verse covers the eventuality when one sees a Muslim making a will or disposing property off in a manner which could cause damage or loss to his children and other inheritors. If so, one must stop him from such bequeathal or such disposal, very much like what the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم did when he stopped the blessed Companion, Sayyidnā Sa'd ibn Abī Waqqās رضى الله عنه from giving the whole, or half, of his property in charity (*Ṣadaqah*), allowing him to give only one-third of his property as such (Mishkāt, Bāb al-Waṣāyā, p. 265), because, 'If the whole, or half of the property was given in charity, the share of the inheritors would have either been all consumed, or curtailed.

Also included in the general sense of the verse is that guardians of the orphaned children should protect their property and give it to them in full when they become mature. They should take pains to accomplish this mission of trust and never let the least negligence on their part affect their duty; if they wish that others treat their children well after them, without causing them any harm or injustice, then,

they should treat the children of others - the orphans - in the same manner.

Misappropriation of the property of the orphans

The fourth verse (10) carries a severe warning for those who pilfer or dispose off the property of orphans unlawfully. It declares: 'Surely, those who eat up the property of the orphans unjustly, they only eat fire into their bellies, and soon they shall enter a blazing Hell.'

This verse equates the property of the orphan with the fire of Hell. Many commentators have interpreted this metaphorically, that is, eating the property of the orphans unjustly is like stuffing one's stomach with fire - because this is what is going to happen to him ultimately in the Hereafter. But, those with deeper insights and proofs do not support the presence of some figure of speech here. According to them, whatever is eaten up from the property of the orphan unlawfully is, in reality, nothing but fire - even though, it may not look like fire at that time. This is like somebody saying that the match-box in his hand was fire, or the piece of arsenic, a killer. Obviously, handling a match-box does not burn the hand, nor does arsenic kill a man by simple handling, not even by putting it in the mouth. However, a slight friction reveals that somebody who called the match-box a fire was right; and similarly, once the arsenic goes down the throat, we know that the one who called arsenic a killer was true. Common generalizations of the Holy Qur'ān also support the view that whatever deeds, good or evil, man is doing, these very deeds are the trees, the flowers and the fruits of Paradise, or the embers of Hell - even though, their form here is different, but these will come forth on the Day of Doom transformed in their true forms. The Holy Qur'ān says: وَوَجَدُوْا مَا عَمِلُوْا حَاضِرًا (Kahf - 18:49) that is, on the Day of Doom, they shall find what they did - present! In other words, the punishment and the reward they shall see will be, in reality, the result of their own deeds.

It appears in some narrations that those who devour the orphan's property unjustly will be raised on the Day of Doom in a state that flames of fire will be seen coming out from inside their bellies through their mouths, nostrils, ears and eyes.

And the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said that a set of people will be raised on the Day of Doom with their mouths erupting with fire. His

noble Companions asked as to who these could be. He said: "Have you not read it in the Qur'ān? (which says): إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَأْكُلُونَ أَمْوَالَ الْيَتٰمٰى ظُلْمًا (those who eat up the property of the orphans unjustly)." (Ibn Kathīr, v.1, p. 456)

The gist of the meaning of the verse is that the property of the orphan eaten up unjustly will be, in reality, the fire of Hell, though it may not be sensed as fire at that time. It is for this reason that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has given very clear instructions to observe most stringent precaution in this matter. Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضى الله عنه narrates that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: أُحَرِّجُ مَالَ الضَّعِيفَيْنِ الْمَرْأَةِ وَالْيَتِيمِ (I warn you to abstain from the property of the two weak ones - the woman and the orphan.) (Ibn Kathīr, v.1, p.456)

A review at this point shows that the entire first section of Sūrah al-Nisā' contains injunctions relating to orphans. They bid protection of the property of the orphans, avoidance of encroaching on their property as one's own and the giving of their due share from the property they have received in inheritance; and they forbid the hasty consumption of the property of the orphans for fear of their growing mature and assuming its control, or the taking of orphaned girls in marriage and lowering their dower, or to usurp their property. In the end the text says that eating up the property of the orphan unjustly is filling of bellies with fire because, after their death, such people will be recompensed by fire filled in their bellies. Mark the use of the word, '*ya'kulūna*' and the warning given to those who 'eat up' the property of the orphan. It means that using the property of the orphan in whatever manner it may be - eating, drinking, consuming, utilizing - is totally unlawful, and a sure cause of Divine wrath. The punishment of eating up what belongs to somebody else unjustly and without any right covers all sorts of uses.

When someone dies, the right of every inheritor attaches itself to everything he owns, to each and every part, to everything big or small. It is tragic that the minor children of the deceased become orphans. Mostly, such children face a certain degree of injustice and excess in every home and everyone who assumes control of the property after the death of the father of these children - whether an uncle or elder brother or mother or some guardian or trustee - falls into doing things forbidden in this section. To begin with, they just go on postponing the

distribution of the property for years together, spending a little here and there to feed and clothe these children. After that, they open up and become all too liberal in spending this jointly-held property on religiously unacceptable practices, customs and wasteful heads of expenditure. They would even spend it on their own person and go on to the limit of manipulating legal documents entering the names of their own children in place of the orphans. These are things hardly a home remains unaffected from.

The donations made for orphans in religious schools and orphanages must be spent on them. Not spending these on the orphans is a form of 'eating up' the property of the orphan.

Rulings

1. Inheritance includes everything owned by the deceased, even the clothes on the dead body. People tend to give these out in charity without realizing that they belong to what has been left by the deceased. There are places where copper utensils are given out to the poor well before the total property is formally distributed, although minors and absentees from among the inheritors have rights in all such things. The proper method is to first distribute the property in accordance with whatever shares are to be received by children, wife, parents, sisters and anyone else as stipulated by the Islamic law of inheritance. Once the ownership passes to sharers, it is upto them who can, if they so desire willingly, give away part of it in charity on behalf of the deceased. If the receivers of such shares wish to do that jointly, let them make sure that they are all adults, for the permission of the minor is not valid. As far as inheritors who are absent are concerned, nothing can be taken from their shares without their permission.

2. The sheet spread over the *Janāzah* while carrying the deceased to the graveyard is not part of the required shroud (*Kafn*). It is not permissible to buy it from the proceeds of the property left by the deceased, because that is something held jointly. However, if someone was to cover the cost on his own, that would be permissible. There are places where a prayer-mat is torn out of the cloth purchased for the shroud and is used by the Imām who leads the *janāzah* prayers. The mat is later given to the Imām. This expense is extra to the needed shroud and it is not permissible to buy it from the proceeds of the hith-

erto combined inheritance.

3. In some areas, new utensils are procured for bathing the deceased and which are broken after use. First of all, there is no need to buy new ones for a bath can be given using utensils already in the house; and if, for any reason, they have to be purchased, then, breaking them is not permissible. It not only amounts to wasting of property but also means causing loss to orphans and absent inheritors whose due rights are attached to the total property.

4. Any expenses before the distribution of inheritance, such as entertainment of guests or charity and alms, are totally impermissible. Giving charity and alms in this manner brings no merit or reward for the deceased. In fact, such giving under the notion that it will bring good returns for the departed soul is a far greater sin. The reason is simple. After the death of a person, all his property belongs to the inheritors in proportion to their respective rights in it. Then, there are orphans among them. Giving away things in charity from the combined property which includes the share of the orphan is like stealing from somebody's property and giving it in charity on behalf of the deceased. This is not correct. First distribute the property, then, let the inheritors give in charity from their shares for the good of the deceased, if they so desire.

It is better not to go for charity and alms from the combined inheritance even before the actual distribution, even though it be with the permission of inheritors. This is because the permission of whoever is an orphan among the inheritors is not just valid right from the outset. As for the adult ones, it is not necessary that their 'permission' comes out of their willing heart. It is quite possible that they are left with no option but give their permission lest they are disgraced before others. In other words, they may say yes with a heavy heart just to ward off the sense of shame.

Let us look at an anecdote ascribed to a pious elder, which will further clarify the issue. This pious elder went to visit a sick Muslim. He had hardly sat with the patient for a little while when the latter died. The sage immediately put out the lamp burning there and gave someone the money to buy oil and re-light the lamp with it. When people around asked him for the reason of his doing so, he said that

this lamp was under the ownership of this person until such time that he was alive and it was correct to use that light. Now that the deceased has left this mortal world, his inheritors have the necessary right over everything he owned. So, it is only through the permission of all inheritors that we can use this lamp and since all of them are not present here, this lamp was lighted at a personal cost.

Verse 11

يُوْصِيْكُمُ اللّٰهُ فِيْٓ اَوْلَادِكُمْ لِلذَّكَرِ مِثْلُ حَظِّ الْاُنْثَيَيْنِ ۚ فَاِنْ
كُنَّ نِسَآءً فَوْقَ اثْنَتَيْنِ فَلَهُنَّ ثُلُثَا مَا تَرَكَ ۚ وَاِنْ كَانَتْ وَاحِدَةً
فَلَهَا النِّصْفُ ۭ وَلِاَبَوَيْهِ لِكُلِّ وَاحِدٍ مِّنْهُمَا السُّدُسُ مِمَّا تَرَكَ اِنْ
كَانَ لَهٗ وَلَدٌ ۚ فَاِنْ لَّمْ يَكُنْ لَّهٗ وَلَدٌ وَّ وَرِثَهٗٓ اَبَوٰهُ فَلِاُمِّهِ الثُّلُثُ ۚ
فَاِنْ كَانَ لَهٗٓ اِخْوَةٌ فَلِاُمِّهِ السُّدُسُ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ وَصِيَّةٍ يُّوْصِيْ بِهَآ
اَوْ دَيْنٍ ۭ اٰبَاۗؤُكُمْ وَ اَبْنَاۗؤُكُمْ لَا تَدْرُوْنَ اَيُّهُمْ اَقْرَبُ لَكُمْ نَفْعًا ۭ
فَرِيْضَةً مِّنَ اللّٰهِ ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ عَلِيْمًا حَكِيْمًا ﴿١١﴾

Allah directs you concerning your children: for a male there is a share equal to that of two females. But, if they be (only) women, more than two, then they get two-third of what one left behind. And if she be one, she gets one-half. And for his parents, for each of them, there is one-sixth of what he left in case he has a child. But, if he has no child and his parents have inherited him, then, his mother gets one-third. And if he has some brothers (or sisters), his mother gets one-sixth, all after (settling) the will he might have made, or debt. Your fathers and your sons - you do not know who, out of them, is closer to you in being beneficial. All this is determined by Allah. Surely, Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise. [11]

People entitled to inheritance were briefly mentioned in verse 7 of the previous section which also carries details about some kinds of those so entitled. Also given there are their shares under different circumstances. More details in this connection shall be appearing later towards the end of this Sūrah. Remaining shares have been identified

in *aḥādīth*. Muslim jurists have collected and codified all details of the rules of inheritance from the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth, giving it the status of a permanent science which, in Islāmic terminology, is known as *'Ilmul-Farā'iḍ* (the Science of the Laws of Inheritance).

The present verse (11) describes shares for children and parents along with some related aspects of inheritance.

INHERITANCE

Preliminary Rights on the Property of the deceased

According to the principles of Islāmic law, the expenses incurred on the shrouding and burial of a Muslim deceased should be the first thing to be paid out of the property left behind by him. This should be done in accordance with Sharī'ah avoiding the extremes of extravagance or stinginess. After that, his debts should be paid. If the amount of his debts is just equal to the property left by him, or even more than that, then, there will be no distribution of inheritance and no application of any will. And in case there remains some property after paying debts, or if there are no debts, then, subject to any will made by him which should not be a will of sin, then, this will should be carried out to the extent of one-third of his remaining property. If someone makes a will for his entire property, it will not take effect. Such will shall be considered valid for only one-third of his property. The fact is that making a will for more than one-third of the property is not appropriate; and if it is done with the intention of excluding inheritors, it becomes a sin.

Once the debts are paid and the will has been applied within one-third, the rest of the property should be distributed among the legal heirs, details of which are available in books of *Farā'iḍ*, the Muslim law of inheritance. Incidentally, if the deceased has made no will, then, following the payment of debts, the whole of the remaining property shall be distributed as inheritance.

The share of children

As it has appeared in the previous section, the distribution of inheritance shall be on the principle of الاقرب فالا قرب (the nearest, then, the nearest). Since the children of the deceased and his parents are

the nearest, therefore, they inherit under all conditions. These relations are the nearest and most direct of all relationships that human beings have, others being indirect. So, the Holy Qur'ān takes up their shares first and beginning from the share of children, it says:

يُوصِيكُمُ اللّٰهُ فِيٓ أَوْلَادِكُمْ لِلذَّكَرِ مِثْلُ حَظِّ الْأُنْثَيَيْنِ

> Allah directs you concerning your children: for a male there is a share equal to that of two females.

This is a universal rule which entitles boys and girls both as recipients of inheritance, determines the shares of each and, at the same time, unfolds the operative rule in the event the deceased leaves behind both male and female children when their shares in the property will be distributed in a way that each boy gets twice that of a girl. For instance, if someone leaves behind one boy and two girls, the property will be split in four portions or shares out of which 2/4 will be given to the boy and 1/4 to each girl.

The importance of giving shares to girls

The Holy Qur'ān demonstrates visible concern to ensure that girls are given their share when it mentions the share of girls as a basis for determining the share of boys. In other words, instead of saying - 'for two females there is a share equal to that of one male'- it has elected to say: لِلذَّكَرِ مِثْلُ حَظِّ الْأُنْثَيَيْنِ (for a male there is a share equal to that of two females.) Those who do not give shares to sisters on the pretext that they have forgone their right are in error, because their sisters usually do not forgo their rights willingly. Done reluctantly, with the knowledge that they are not going to get anything anyway, they think, why create bad blood between brothers and sisters? Such an act of forgiving is not valid under Islamic law. Their claim remains due against brothers - and those who usurp inheritance are terrible sinners. In case minor girls hold shares in such inheritance, not giving them their shares is a sin committed twice by usurping the share of a legal heir and by devouring the property of an orphan.

As part of further explanation later, the share of girls has been described by saying:

فَإِنْ كُنَّ نِسَآءً فَوْقَ اثْنَتَيْنِ فَلَهُنَّ ثُلُثَا مَا تَرَكَ

It means that, if there is no male child and there are only girls and

they are more than one, then, they shall get two-third of the inherited property in which all girls will be equal sharers. The remaining one-third will go to other rightful heirs of the inheritance, such as the parents of the deceased, wife or husband. Two girls and more than two will all share in the two-third.

The share of 'more than two' girls appears in the Qur'ānic verse very clearly فَوْقَ اثْنَتَيْنِ (more than two). However, if there are two girls only, they are governed by the same rule which governs more than two. The proof appears in Ḥadīth:

عَنْ جَابِرِ بْنِ عَبْدِاللهِ قَالَ خَرَجْنَا مَعَ رَسُوْلِ اللهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ حَتّٰى جِئْنَا اِمْرَءَةً مِنَ الْاَنْصَارِ فِي الاسواف فجاءت المرءة بابنتين لها فقالت يا رسول الله هاتان بنتا ثابت بن قيس قتل معك يوم احد وقد استفاء عمهما مالهما وميراثهما كله ولم يدع مالا الا اخذه فما ترى يا رسول الله فوالله لا تنكحان ابدا الا ولهما مال، فقال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: يقضى الله فى ذلك و قال نزلت سورة النسآء "يوصيكم الله فى اولادكم" الاية فقال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم ادعوا لى المرءة وصاحبها فقال لعمهما اعطهما الثلثين واعط امهما الثمن وما بقى فلك، (ابوداؤد كتاب الفرائض، وبمعناه فى الترمذى ابواب الفرائض)

Sayyidnā Jābir ibn 'Abdullāh has reported the following event: "Once we went out with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ until we passed by an Anṣārī woman in the neighbourhood of Aswāf. The woman came along with her two girls and said: O Messenger of Allah, these two girls are daughters of Thābit ibn Qays (my husband) who fell a martyr at the battle of Uḥud while with you. The uncle of these girls has taken possession of whatever they had of their entire inheritance and has left nothing for them. What do you say about it, O Messenger of Allah? By Allah, these girls can never hope to be taken in marriage by anyone unless they have some assets. Then, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: Allah will decide in this matter

Sayyidnā Jābir رضی اللہ عنہ says: When this verse of Sūratun-Nisā' يُوْصِيْكُمُ اللّٰهُ فِيْٓ اَوْلَادِكُمْ was revealed, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: Call that woman and the man she mentioned (the brother of her deceased husband who had taken possession of his entire property). He said to the uncle of the girls: Give the girls two-

thirds of the entire property; their mother, one-eighth and what remains is for you.

(Abū Dāwūd, Kitāb al-Farā'iḍ & Tirmidhī, Abwāb al-Farā'id)

In the case mentioned in the *ḥadīth*, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم gave out two-third to two girls as well, following the very rule of more than two which appears in the verse of the Holy Qur'ān under reference.

After that, it was said: وَإِنْ كَانَتْ وَاحِدَةً فَلَهَا النِّصْفُ It means: If the deceased left behind one girl only and no other children, then, she will get one-half of what her father or mother have left behind. The rest will go to other inheritors.

The share of parents

The text, moving to the share of the parents of the deceased, mentions three states:

1. Firstly, the deceased may have left behind parents who are still alive, and children too, whether only one boy or girl, in which case, the father and mother will get 1/6 each. The legacy that remains will go to children, wife or husband. There are particular circumstances when some of the remainder returns back to the father which is in addition to the one-sixth fixed for him. In the terminology of *'Ilmu'l-Farā'id* (The Science of the Laws of Inheritance), such entitlement is known as the entitlement of "*Ta'ṣīb*: تعصيب (Agnatic kinship).

2. Secondly, under a situation when the deceased has no children, brothers or sisters, but does have parents still living, the mother will get 1/3 of the inherited property while the father will get the remaining two-third. This rule governs a situation when the husband or the wife of the deceased is not alive to share in his inheritance. If the husband or wife is present, their share will be taken out first and from what remains, 1/3 will go to the mother and 2/3 to the father.

3. Thirdly, under a situation when the deceased has no children but does have brothers and sisters whose number is two, whether two brothers or two sisters, or more than two, then, under that situation, the mother will get one-sixth and, if there are no other heirs, the remaining 5/6 will go to the fathe. As evident, the presence of brothers and sisters has reduced the share of the mother, but the brothers and

sisters will get nothing because the father is nearer as compared to brothers and sisters. What remains will go to the father. In this situation, the share of the mother has come to 1/6 instead of 1/3. In the terminology of *'Farā'iḍ'*, this is known as "*Ḥajb al-Nuqṣān*". The presence of these brothers and sisters causing reduction in the share of parents, irrespective of whether they are real or whether they are from the same father but different mother or whether from the same mother but different father, under all such conditions, their presence will reduce the share of the mother - subject to their being more than one.

The text, after describing the fixed share, says:

آبَاؤُكُمْ وَأَبْنَاؤُكُمْ لَا تَدْرُونَ أَيُّهُمْ أَقْرَبُ لَكُمْ نَفْعًا فَرِيضَةً مِّنَ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا

It means: 'These shares for children and parents have been determined by Allah Almighty Himself in His infinite wisdom because He is Wise and He knows everything. The shares fixed have great considerations behind them. If the distribution of inheritance was left to your opinion, you would have made beneficialness the criterion of such distribution. But, who will be the best to receive or deliver real benefit is something which would have been difficult for you to ascertain with any measure of certainty. Therefore, 'nearness in kinship' was preferred to 'being beneficial' as the criterion of the injunction.

This verse of the Holy Qur'ān clearly declares that the shares of inheritance determined by Allah Almighty are settled injunctions from Him. Nobody has any right to enforce opinion or to increase or decrease its stipulations. These should be accepted whole-heartedly This command from everyone's Creator and Master is based on what is wise and beneficial for human beings. There is no aspect of benefit outside the expanse of His knowledge and there is no command He gives bereft of some or the other element of wisdom. Man cannot, all by himself, recognize his gain and loss in the real sense. If this question of the distribution of inheritance was left to man's personal opinion, it was certain that man would not have decided correctly because of his limitations in understanding and, as a result of which, lack of moderation and justice would have affected the distribution of

inheritance. So, Allah Almighty, in His most exalted majesty, took this responsibility in His hands so that justice and equity reign supreme in the distribution of property and the capital left by the deceased circulates in the hands of competent inheritors in a manner which is just and equitable.

Verse 12...

وَلَكُمْ نِصْفُ مَا تَرَكَ أَزْوَاجُكُمْ إِنْ لَّمْ يَكُنْ لَّهُنَّ وَلَدٌ ۚ فَإِنْ كَانَ
لَهُنَّ وَلَدٌ فَلَكُمُ الرُّبُعُ مِمَّا تَرَكْنَ مِنْ بَعْدِ وَصِيَّةٍ يُّوصِينَ بِهَا
أَوْ دَيْنٍ ۚ وَلَهُنَّ الرُّبُعُ مِمَّا تَرَكْتُمْ إِنْ لَّمْ يَكُنْ لَّكُمْ وَلَدٌ ۚ فَإِنْ كَانَ
لَكُمْ وَلَدٌ فَلَهُنَّ الثُّمُنُ مِمَّا تَرَكْتُمْ مِّنْ بَعْدِ وَصِيَّةٍ تُوصُونَ
بِهَا أَوْ دَيْنٍ ﴿١٢...﴾

And for you there is one-half of what your wives left behind, in case they have no child. But, if they have a child, you get one-fourth of what they left, after (settling) the will they might have made, or debt. And for them (the wives) there is one-fourth of what you left, in case you have no child. But, if you have a child, they get one-eight of what you left, after (settling) the will you might have made, or debt. [12...]

Upto this point, the text has described the shares of those competent to inherit, those who had the affinity of lineage and birth with the deceased. The present verse talks about some others who do have the competence but are not related by lineage. Instead, they are related by marriage. Details appear in the Commentary.

Commentary

The share of the husband and the wife

In this part of verse 12, the shares of the husband and the wife have been determined. The share of the husband has been mentioned first, perhaps to show its importance because after the death of the wife, the husband becomes part of some other family. If the wife dies at the home of her parents with her assets too being there, her people may avoid giving the share due to the husband. By describing the right of the husband first, the Holy Qur'ān has possibly condemned

this practice. To explain in details, it means that in case the deceased wife has left no child behind, the husband will get, after the payment of debt and execution of will, one-half of the total property left by the deceased. Out of the remaining half, other heirs, such as the parents of the deceased, her brothers and sisters, will get their shares according to rules set for them.

If the deceased wife has left children - one or two or more, whether male or female, either from the same husband, or from some previous husband, then, the present husband will get, after the payment of debt and execution of will, one-fourth of the total property left by the deceased woman. Shares from the remaining three-fourth will go to other heirs.

If it is the husband who dies leaving his wife behind and leaves no children, the wife will get, after the payment of debt and the execution of will, one-fourth of the total property left by the deceased. And if he has left a child - either from the present wife or from some other wife - she will get, after the settlement of debt and will, a one-eight share. And if the deceased husband had more than one wife, all alive at the time of his death, the attending details shall remain the same, however, the share prescribed for the 'wife' (i.e. 1/4 or 1/8) shall be divided equally between all the wives. In other words, every woman will not get a share of one-fourth and one-eighth. Instead, all wives will share the one-fourth or one-eight equally. Then, under both these conditions, the inheritance which remains after settling the share of the husband/ wife will be distributed among other heirs left by them.

Ruling

It must be ascertained before the distribution of inheritance that the *mahr* (dower) of the wife has been paid. If the deceased has not paid the *mahr* of his wife, this will be taken as debt, and will have to be paid first from the total property, like all other debts. The inheritance will be distributed only after that. It should be noted that the woman, after having received her *mahr,* shall go on to receive her fixed share in the inheritance as a competent inheritor. And in case, the property left by the deceased is not more than the value of dower, and nothing remains after it is paid, the entire property will be given to the woman against her debt of *mahr* very much like other debts and,

as a result, no heir will receive any share from the inheritance thus used up.

... Verse 12

وَإِنْ كَانَ رَجُلٌ يُّوْرَثُ كَلٰلَةً اَوِ امْرَاَةٌ وَّلَهٗٓ اَخٌ اَوْ اُخْتٌ فَلِكُلِّ وَاحِدٍ مِّنْهُمَا السُّدُسُۚ فَاِنْ كَانُوْٓا اَكْثَرَ مِنْ ذٰلِكَ فَهُمْ شُرَكَآءُ فِى الثُّلُثِ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ وَصِيَّةٍ يُّوْصٰى بِهَآ اَوْ دَيْنٍۙ غَيْرَ مُضَآرٍّۚ وَّصِيَّةً مِّنَ اللّٰهِؕ وَاللّٰهُ عَلِيْمٌ حَلِيْمٌ ﴿...١٢﴾

And if the man being inherited, or the woman, is *Kalālah* (having no father or son to inherit) and he has a brother or a sister, then, for each of them there is one-sixth. And if they are more than that, they shall be sharers in one-third, after (settling) the will that might have been made, or debt, causing no damage. All this is prescribed by Allah. And Allah is All-Knowing, Forbearing. [...12]

After having made a brief mention of rights of relations emerging from lineage and marriage, the text now introduces the injunction which covers the inheritance of a particular deceased who has left no children or parents, details of which appear below

The inheritance of *Kalālah*

This later part of verse 12 describes the injunction relating to the inheritance of *Kalālah*. There have been many definitions of *Kalālah*. Al-Qurṭubī reports these in his *Tafsīr*. According to the most well-known definition, 'A person who dies leaving no ascendants and descendants is *Kalālah*.'

'Allāmah al-Ālūsī, the author of Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī says that *Kalālah* is really a verbal noun used in the sense of *Kalāl*' meaning 'to become exhausted' which denotes 'weakness'. The name *Kalālah* has been applied to every relationship other than that of father and son because that relationship is weak as compared to the relationship of father and son.

Moreover, the word, *Kalālah* has also been applied to the deceased who left no son or father to inherit, as well as to the inheritor who is

neither the son nor the father of the deceased. The lexical derivation requires that the word, ذُو : *dhū*, should be deemed as understood though not expressed explicitly. Thus *Kalālah* will be taken in the sense of *Dhū Kalālah*, meaning 'one having weak relation'. Later on, the word also came to be applied to the property left as inheritance by a deceased having no son and father.

In gist, if a person, man or woman, dies and leaves behind neither father nor grandfather nor children, but does leave a brother or sister from the same mother and different father, the brother will get 1/6 and, if there is none, the sister will get 1/6. However, if they are more than one (for example, there may be one brother and one sister, or two brothers and two sisters) then, they all will share one-third of the entire property of the deceased. Here, the male will not get twice that of the female. 'Allāmah al-Qurṭubī says:

وَلَيْسَ فِي الْفَرَائِضِ مَوْضِعٌ يَكُوْنَ فِيْهِ الذَّكَرُ وَالْأُنْثٰى سَوَآءً إِلَّا فِيْ مِيْرَاثِ الْاَخْوَةِ لِلْاُمِّ

The share of the brother and sister

Let it be clear that this verse refers to the share of *Akhyāfī* brothers and sisters (i.e. from the same mother and different fathers; also referred to as half-brothers and half-sisters). Though, this restriction has not been mentioned in the present verse, but consensus holds it as creditable. The *Qirā'ah* or rendition of Sayyidnā Sa'd ibn Abī Waqqāṣ رضی اللہ عنہ in this verse is: وَلَهٗ أَخٌ أَوْ أُخْتٌ مِنْ أُمِّهٖ (and he has a brother or sister from his mother) as has been reported by al-Qurṭubī, al-Ālūsī, al-Jaṣṣāṣ and others. Although this rendition has not come to us through *tawātur* (a consistent narration of a very large number of persons in all ages) but because of the consensus of the entire Muslim *ummah*, it is worth practicing. Another clear proof is that Allah Almighty mentions the inheritance of *Kalālah* at the end of Sūrah Al-Nisā' as well. If, it has been said there, there is one sister, she will get half. And if there is one brother, he will inherit the entire property of his sister. And if there are two sisters, they will get 2/3. And if there are several brothers and sisters, the male will be given twice that of the female. This injunction appearing at the end of the Sūrah refers to *'Ainī* (real and full) brothers and sisters, and to *'Allātī* (from the same father and

different mothers) brothers and sisters. If *'Allātī* and *'Ainī* brothers and sisters were to be included here, it will cause a contradiction in injunctions.

The issues regarding will (*Waṣiyyah*)

The shares of inheritance have been described thrice in this section and it has been said that this distribution of shares comes after the execution of will and the payment of debt. As it has been stated earlier, one-third of what remains of the property, after taking care of the cost of the funeral for the deceased, and payment of debts, shall be applied to the execution of the will. If the will exceeds the extent of one-third, it is not legally enforceable. According to the rule of Sharī'ah, the payment of debt comes before the execution of will. If the entire property is used up in paying debts, there will be no will to execute and no property to distribute. At all the three places where 'will' has been mentioned, 'it' appears before 'debt'. As obvious, this gives the impression that the right of 'will' precedes 'debt'. Removing this misunderstanding, Sayyidnā 'Alī رضی اللہ عنہ said:

انكم تقرأون هذه الاية مِنْۢ بَعْدِ وَصِيَّةٍ تُوْصُوْنَ بِهَآ اَوْ دَيْنٍ، وان رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم قضى بالدين قبل الوصية . (مشكوة بحواله ترمذى ص ٢٦٤)

(You recite the verse: مِنْۢ بَعْدِ وَصِيَّةٍ تُوْصُوْنَ بِهَآ اَوْ دَيْنٍ that is, 'after settling the will they might have made, or debt' [where 'will' comes first] but [practically] the Holy Prophet, may peace be upon him, has settled, 'debt' before 'will').

Still, we have to know the point as to why will follows debt 'practically' while, in words, it has been mentioned earlier. In this connection, the author of Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī has this to say:

وتقديم الوصية على الدين ذكراً مع ان الدين مقدم عليها حكما لاظهار كمال العناية بتنفيذها لكونها مظنة للتفريط فى ادائها الخ .

It means that the mention of will before debt in this verse is to emphasize upon the enforcement of the wills. Since the beneficiary of a will deserves it without any price paid by him, and often without having a kinship with the testator, it was likely that the inheritors ignore to enforce it or, at least, may cause unnecessary delay in its execution, because they may have not liked to see the property that

was to be inherited by them going to somebody else. So, it was to keep up the importance of will that it was mentioned before debt. Then, it is also not necessary that every person incurs a debt, and if a person incurs it during his life-time, it is not necessary, that the said debt remains unpaid upto the time of his death. And even if the debt was due to be paid at the time of death, even then, since the claim of debt comes from the debtors to which the inheritors cannot say no, the likelihood of any shortcoming in this respect is slim. This is contrary to the case of will in which the deceased, when he bequeaths part of his property, earnestly desires that he should invest it in something good which serves as ongoing charity on his behalf. Since, there is no chance of a claim on this bequeathed property from any side, there was a possibility that the inheritors themselves might fall into some sort of shortcoming, so, it was to offset this likelihood that the 'will' has been mentioned first everywhere as a special measure.

Rulings

1. If there is no debt and no will, the entire property, after taking care of the funeral expenses, will be distributed over the inheritors.

2. Making a will in favour of a heir is not lawful. If someone makes a will in favour of his son, daughter, husband or wife, or for someone else who is going to get a share in his inheritance, then, this will is not enforceable. The inheritors will get what is coming to them as their share in the inheritance. They are not entitled to more than that. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said in his famous address on the occasion of his last Ḥajj:

إِنَّ اللّٰهَ قَدْ اَعْطٰى كُلَّ ذِىْ حَقٍّ حَقَّهٗ فَلَا وَصِيَّةَ لِوَارِثٍ . (مشكوة بحواله ابوداؤد ص ٢٦٥)

(Surely, Allah has given every person his (or her) right. So, there is no will for an inheritor.) (Mishkat with reference to Abū Dāwūd, p. 265)

However, should other inheritors permit, the will made in favour of a particular inheritor, may be executed first and, then, the rest of the property may be distributed in accordance with the method laid down by the Sharī'ah, in which the particular inheritor will also get his fixed share from the inheritance. Some *ḥadīth* narrations do carry the excep-

tion of إِلَّا أَنْ يَّشَاءَ الْوَرَثَةُ (unless inheritors wish). (as in al-Hidāyah).

The words غَيْرَ مُضَآرٍّ (causing no damage) appearing after the rules of inheritence of *Kalālah* have a special significance. They are to warn that even though the execution of the will and paying off the debts have precedence over the shares of the heirs, yet this rule should not be misused to cause harm to the genuine inheritors.

If anyone makes a will or makes a false admission of indebtedness so as to deprive inheritors, then, he is doing something strictly forbidden and is committing a major sin.

There are many ways damage can be done through debt and will. For example, one may deliberately lie that he is in debt, just to let that be given to a friend or somebody else. Or, he may show something special which he owns personally as something he holds in trust for somebody so that it can stay out of the total inheritable property. Or, one may make a will for property beyond the extent of one-third. Or, he lies about an unpaid loan he gave to somebody and says that the debt was paid off so that it does not pass on to the inheritors. Or, one may, during his illness culminating in death (مرض الموت), make a gift of more than one-third in the name of somebody.

These are forms of causing damage. Every legator who is going to bid farewell to this mortal world should do his best to stay away from causing such damages during the last moments of his life.

It should be noticed that although the words 'causing no damage' have appeared only with the rules relating to *Kalālah*, however, the rule laid down by them is general and is also understood at two previous places where the precedence of will and debt has been mentioned in these verses. Therefore, it is not the *Kalālah* only who should refrain from causing harm to his inheritors, but the same rule applies to all persons who wish to make a will.

The emphasis on distribution according to fixed shares

Towards the end of the verse, after the shares of inheritance have been described, Allah Almighty has said: وَصِيَّةً مِّنَ اللّٰهِ (All this is prescribed by Allah). It means that it is imperative to act upon whatever has been prescribed in relation to shares as fixed and the payment of debt and the execution of will as emphasized. Being a

mandate and injunction of supreme significance, one should do nothing to contravene it. Then, as additional warning it was said: وَاللّٰهُ عَلِيْمٌ حَلِيْمٌ (And Allah is All-Knowing, Forbearing). It means that Allah knows everything and He has apportioned these shares knowing everybody's true state of being as in His knowledge. Whoever obeys and acts in accordance with these injunctions, this good deed of his shall not remain outside the reach of His knowledge. And whoever contravenes these injunctions, this evil conduct of his shall certainly appear as it is in the knowledge of Allah for which he shall be held accountable.

In addition to that, if a deceased person has caused damage to his heirs through debt or will, Allah knows that as well. So, one should never be fearless from Allah's punishment. However, it is quite possible that Allah Almighty may not punish a person right here in this mortal world, because He is Forbearing. But, the one who disobeys and acts in contravention should better not deceive himself by thinking that he really got away.

Verses 13 - 14

تِلْكَ حُدُوْدُ اللّٰهِ ۭ وَمَنْ يُّطِعِ اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ يُدْخِلْهُ جَنّٰتٍ تَجْرِىْ
مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْھٰرُ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَا ۭ وَ ذٰلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيْمُ ﴿١٣﴾
وَمَنْ يَّعْصِ اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ وَيَتَعَدَّ حُدُوْدَهٗ يُدْخِلْهُ نَارًا خَالِدًا
فِيْهَا ۠ وَلَهٗ عَذَابٌ مُّهِيْنٌ ﴿١٤﴾

These are the limits set by Allah. And whoever obeys Allah and His Messenger, He will admit him to gardens beneath which rivers flow, remaining there for ever. And that is a great success. [13] **And whoever disobeys Allah and His Messenger and crosses the limits set by Him, He shall admit him to the Fire, remaining there for ever. And for him there is a humiliating punishment.** [14]

Commentary

It is the consistent style of the Holy Qur'ān that whenever it has described the beliefs and injunctions prescribed by Allah, it is followed by promises of reward or warnings of punishment.

This is what has been done here in these two verses after mentioning the rules of inheritance. The purpose is to stress upon Muslims to obey these injunctions.

SOME ADDITIONAL RULES OF INHERITANCE

A Muslim cannot inherit from a *Kāfir*

Although, the distribution of inheritance is based on nearness of kinship, but there are certain exceptions to this rule. First of all, the deceased and his inheritor should not be from two different religions. Therefore, a Muslim will not inherit from any *kāfir* and no *kāfir* from a Muslim, no matter what lineal relationship they may have between them. The Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said:

لَايَرِثُ الْمُسْلِمُ الْكَافِرَ وَلَا الْكَافِرُ الْمُسْلِمُ (مشکوۃ ص ۲۶۳)

(The Muslim does not inherit the *kāfir*, nor does the *kāfir* (inherit) the Muslim.) (Mishkāt, p. 263)

This rule relates to a situation when a person is a Muslim or a *kāfir* by birth. But, if a person who was first a Muslim, turned away from Islām and became an apostate and died or was killed in that state of apostasy, all his earnings while being a Muslim shall go to his Muslim inheritors, and whatever he may have earned after his apostasy shall be deposited in the *Bayt al-Māl* (Public Exchequer).

But, if a woman becomes an apostate, all her property, whether acquired during her days of Islam or during apostasy, shall go to her Muslim inheritors. However, an apostate as such, man or woman, shall not inherit from any Muslim nor from any other apostate.

The inheritance of the killer

If someone kills a person from whose property he was entitled to receive a share, he shall no longer remain his inheritor and shall be excluded from the inheritance of the person whom he has killed.

The Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said: اَلْقَاتِلُ لَايَرِثُ (مشکوۃ ص ۲۶۳) (The killer shall not inherit.) (Mishkāt, p. 263) However, some forms of *qatl al-khaṭā'* (accidental or unintended homicide) are excepted from this rule, details of which appear in books of *Fiqh*.

The inheritance of the unborn child

If a person leaves some children and his wife is pregnant, then this

unborn child will also be counted among inheritors. But, since it is either difficult or uncertain to determine the sex or the number of children in the mother's womb, it would be appropriate to postpone the distribution of inheritance until the birth of the child. If, the distribution of property has to be made necessarily, then, as an expedient measure, one must suppose two situations in terms of a boy or a girl and distribute to the inheritors the lesser portion coming out of the two situations. The remaining should be held for the child-to-be-born.

The inheritance of a woman in the period of *'iddah*

In case a person divorces his wife and the divorce is revocable, and this person dies before the revocation of the divorce and the expiry of his wife's waiting period, then this woman will get a share in the inheritance, for the marriage is in force.

If a person divorces his wife during his sickness culminating in his death, even though the divorce is irrevocable or pronounced thrice, and he died before the expiry of the waiting period, even then, this woman will get a share in the inheritance. And in order to make her inherit, the longer of the two waiting periods shall be taken as operative in the following manner.

The waiting period following a divorce is three menstrual periods and the waiting period following the death of the husband is four (lunar) months and ten days. The waiting period out of the two which lasts longer shall be prescribed as the waiting period for the aforesaid woman so that the woman may get a share in the inheritance as far as possible.

And if a person divorces his wife, irrevocably or by pronouncing it thrice, prior to any sickness culminating in his death and, a few days later he passes away during the period of his wife's waiting period, then, she will not get a share in the inheritance under this situation. However, if the divorce given was revocable, she will inherit.

Ruling:

If a wife secures a separation from the husband at her own instance (خلع : *khul'*) within the period of his sickness which culminates in his death, then, she will not be an inheritor, even though her husband may die during her waiting period.

The inheritance of '*aṣbāt*'

There are twelve heirs for whom specified shares have been settled and fixed by the Shari'ah known as *Farā'iḍ*. These heirs are called اصحاب الفروض *aṣḥābul-furūḍ*, that is, 'the possessors of obligatory shares in inheritance as determined in the Holy Qur'ān.' These have been explained earlier. If there is no heir from the category of *aṣḥābul-furūḍ* or there remains some property after shares have been given to *aṣḥābul-furūḍ*, this remainder or residue is given to *'aṣbah* (agnatic heir, or residuary). There are times when one person alone inherits in both capacities. There are other situations when the children of the deceased and his father too become *'aṣbah* and so do the offspring of the father, that is, the brother.

There are several kinds of *'aṣbāt* or agnates, details of which appear in the books of *Farā'iḍ*. To illustrate, here is an example: *Zayd* died leaving behind four heirs - wife, daughter, mother and uncle. *Zayd's* property will be divided into a total of twenty four shares. Half of these, that is, twelve shares will go to the daughter, three shares to the wife against her 1/8, four shares to the mother against her 1/6, and the residue of five shares will go the uncle in the capacity of his being *'aṣbah*, the nearest male agnate.

Rulings

1. If there are no *'aṣbāt* (agnatic heirs) the residue of the property following the distribution of shares to *aṣḥābul-furūḍ*, is also given to them. In the terminology of *'Ilmul-farā'iḍ*, this is known as the principle of *Radd* or Return since the residue 'returns' to them in proportion to their shares. However, the husband or the wife is not entitled to this 'return' and they are not given any more than their specified shares.

2. If there is no one from *aṣḥābul-furūḍ* and no one from *'aṣbāt* either, the inheritance goes to *Dhawil-Arḥām* (maternal kinsmen). There is a large list of *Dhawil-Arḥām* which includes maternal grandsons and grand daughters, offspring of sisters, paternal aunts, maternal uncles, and aunts. Since the subject has lot more details which cannot be taken up in the present context, it is hoped that comments already offered will be sufficient.

Verses 15-16

وَالّٰتِيْ يَاْتِيْنَ الْفَاحِشَةَ مِنْ نِّسَآئِكُمْ فَاسْتَشْهِدُوْا عَلَيْهِنَّ
اَرْبَعَةً مِّنْكُمْ ۚ فَاِنْ شَهِدُوْا فَاَمْسِكُوْهُنَّ فِي الْبُيُوْتِ حَتّٰى
يَتَوَفّٰهُنَّ الْمَوْتُ اَوْ يَجْعَلَ اللّٰهُ لَهُنَّ سَبِيْلًا ﴿۱۵﴾ وَالَّذٰنِ يَاْتِيٰنِهَا
مِنْكُمْ فَاٰذُوْهُمَا ۚ فَاِنْ تَابَا وَاَصْلَحَا فَاَعْرِضُوْا عَنْهُمَا ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ
كَانَ تَوَّابًا رَّحِيْمًا ﴿۱۶﴾

And those of your women who commit the shameful act, then have four witnesses from among you. So, if they do testify, then confine those women to their homes until death overcomes them or Allah prescribes a way for them. [15] **And those two of you who commit it, torture them both. But if they repent and amend, turn away from them. Surely, Allah is Most-Relenting, Very-Merciful.** [16]

Sequence

In previous verses, the objective was to correct the malpractices of the days of ignorance committed about orphans and inheritances. The people of *jāhiliyyah* also used to subject women to cruel treatment. They had certain other evil customs also, such as marrying prohibited women.

The present verses are meant to correct such customs, however, it has been permitted that if a woman commits a proven guilt, she can be punished. This subject of correcting the evil customs will continue through the next two or three sections.

Commentary

These verses prescribe punishments for men and women who commit *zinā*, (adultery or fornication). If this comes from women, the first verse requires the presence of four male witnesses to prove it. It means that the executive authority before which the case goes should call for four qualified witnesses to prove *zinā*. Then, it is necessary that all the witnesses are male. The testimony of women in this connection is not valid.

Since the guilt of *zinā* is of extremely grave nature which not only

violates honour and modesty, but also brings bad name to the family, Islam has taken very strict attitude while setting the standard of evidence to prove this guilt. Firstly, there came the condition that witnesses have to be men; the evidence of women was not considered valid. Secondly, the number of the required witnesses is raised to four. As obvious, this condition is very hard to meet. It is something which can very seldom take place. This strict approach was taken so that the husband of the woman, his mother or (another) wife or sister do not level undue accusations against her out of personal spite. It was also to check that other ill-wishing people do not get any chance to release their personal hostility by accusing her falsely. Testimony to *zinā* by less than four individuals renders their evidence invalid in which case the complainant and the witnesses may all be charged as liars and the *Ḥadd* of *Qadhf* (punishment for false accusation) becomes operative against them for having falsely accused a Muslim.

It has been very clearly said in Sūrah An-Nūr:

لَوْلَا جَآءُوْا عَلَيْهِ بِاَرْبَعَةِ شُهَدَآءَ فَاِذْلَمْ يَاْتُوْا بِالشُّهَدَآءِ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ هُمُ الْكٰذِبُوْنَ

which means that those who cannot produce four witnesses are liars.

Some revered elders, describing the wisdom behind the need to have four witnesses, have said that since this case involves two individuals, man and woman, this one single case comes, so to speak, under the purview of one rule for two cases. Since each case requires two witnesses, so four witnesses will be necessary in this case.

Towards the end of the verse, it is said that should they both repent and correct themselves, then, leave them. It means that, in case they have repented after punishment, they should not be disgraced and punished any more. It does not mean that the act of repentance has absolved them of the punishment because this repentance has been mentioned after punishment as obvious from the ramification of the letter *fā'* (literally, "then, turn away", which has been left as understood in the present translation). However, in case repentance has not been made, reproach is in order even after punishment.

No definite *Ḥadd* (punishment) has been described in these two

verses of the Holy Qur'ān. What has been said here is limited to "torture them" and "confine the fornicating women to their homes". No particular method of such "torture" has been described either, and this has been left to the discretion of the authorities. Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه says that torture here means that they should be verbally reproached and put to shame, as well as, given physical punishment such as hitting with hands and shoes ... This statement reported from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه appears to be illustrative. The fact of the matter is that this whole thing has been left to the discretion of the authorities.

In the order of revelation, the injunction 'to torture' the adulterers came first, and it was later that the women guilty of adultery were ordered to be 'confined to their homes'. While giving this command, the Holy Qur'ān has mentioned two limits for the period of their confinement. The words used are: "Confine those women to their homes until death overcomes them or Allah prescribes a way for them". It means that such women shall be confined to their homes till their death, however, if Allah prescribes some other punishment for them while they are still alive, then that punishment will replace the punishment of confinement. That new (expected) punishment has been referred to in this verse as 'a way' prescribed by Allah. Later this 'way' as promised in this verse was prescribed and was revealed. Interpreting the word 'way' used in this verse, Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه says, يعنى الرجم للثيب والجلد للبكر (that is, stoning to death, for the married and lashing for the unmarried.) (al-Bukhārī, Kitāb al-Tafsīr, v.2, p. 657)

This "way" stands proved through clear statements of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم himself where the relevant injunctions for the married and the unmarried have been described separately. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had pronounced the *Ḥadd* punishment of *zinā* in the case of Sayyidnā Mā'iz ibn Mālik رضى الله عنه and a woman from the tribe of Azd. Since both of them were married, they were stoned to death. In addition to that, a couple from among the Jews of Madinah was also stoned to death because of *zinā* and this judgment against them was pronounced on the authority of an injunction of Torah.

The injunction relating to the unmarried offender is mentioned in Sūrah al-Nūr of the Holy Qur'ān itself:

اَلزَّانِيَةُ وَالزَّانِیْ فَاجْلِدُوْا كُلَّ وَاحِدٍ مِّنْهُمَا مِائَةَ جَلْدَةٍ

(The fornicator, woman or man, administer each one of them - a hundred lashes.) - (24:2)

A verse of the Holy Qur'ān was also revealed earlier to cover the injunction of *rajm* (stoning to death), but its recitation was later on abrogated. However, the injunction itself was retained as operative.

Sayyidnā 'Umar رضی الله عنه has said:

اِنَّ اللّٰهَ بَعَثَ مُحَمَّدًا بِالْحَقِّ وَاَنْزَلَ عَلَيْهِ الْكِتٰبَ فَكَانَ مِمَّا اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ تَعَالٰى اٰيَةَ الرَّجْمِ رَجَمَ رَسُوْلُ اللّٰهِ صَلَّى اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ وَرَجَمْنَا بَعْدَهٗ وَالرَّجْمُ فِیْ كِتَابِ اللّٰهِ حَقٌّ عَلٰى مَنْ زَنٰى اِذَا اَحْصَنَ مِنَ الرِّجَالِ وَالنِّسَآءِ (بخاری و مسلم - مشکوۃ ص ۳۰۹)

(Surely, Allah sent Muḥammad صلی الله علیه وسلم with the truth and sent down to him the Book. Then, in what was revealed by Allah Almighty there was the verse of *Rajm*. The Holy Prophet صلی الله علیه وسلم stoned and we stoned after him and the revealed injunction of *Rajm* stands proved against every one who commits *zinā* despite being married, whether man or woman.) (al-Bukhārī, Muslim, as in Mishkāt, p. 309)

To sum up, the injunction of 'torturing' and 'confining to homes' which appears in these verses was abrogated after the subsequent revelation of the legal *Ḥadd* punishment of *zinā*, that is, one hundred lashes or *Rajm* will be mandatory. More details in this connection will, God willing, appear in the commentary on Sūrah al-Nūr

Homosexuality

The above discussion was based on the assumptions that both verses 15 and 16 relate to the fornication or adultery committed between men and women. However, some commentators of the Holy Qur'ān, including Qāḍī Thanāullah Pānīpatī, are of the view that verse 16 refers to homosexual act committed between two males. Verse 16 is translated as follows:

"And those two of you who commit it (the shameful act), torture them both".

Here the Arabic word used for 'those two of you is a musculine pronoun which presumes males on both sides. On this basis, these

commentators have opined that this verse relates to two males committing unnatural shameful act, i.e. homosexuality. The commentators, who take both verses as referring to fornication or adultery, refute this argument on the principle that in general usage musculine expressions include feminine also. Be that as it may, the possibility of a reference to homosexuality in this verse cannot be ruled out. Therefore, it is pertinent here to give some details about the severe prohibition of homosexuality. Here are some Traditions of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and his noble Companions on this subject:

عن أبى هريرة رضى الله عنه أن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم قال: لعن الله سبعة من خلقه من فوق سبع سموته وردّد اللعنة على واحد منهم ثلاثاً ولعن كل واحد منهم لعنة تكفيه، قال: ملعون من عمل عمل قوم لوط، ملعون من عمل عمل قوم لوط، ملعون من عمل عمل قوم لوط، . (الحديث)

As narrated by Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضى الله عنه , the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: "Allah has cursed seven types of his creatures from above the seven heavens. He has cursed one of them thrice, while has cursed the others one time which is enough for them. (About the one whom He has cursed thrice) He has said, "Cursed is he who did what the people of Lot did. Cursed is he who did what the people of Lot did. Cursed is he who did what the people of Lot did." (At-Targhib wat-Tarhib)

وعن أبى هريرة رضى الله عنه عن النبى صلى الله عليه وسلم قال: أربعة يصبحون فى غضب الله ويمسون فى سخط الله، قلت: من هم يا رسول الله؟ قال: المتشبهون من الرجال بالنساء والمتشبهات من النساء بالرجال، والذى يأتى البهيمة، والذى يأتى الرجال .

Sayyidna Abū Hurairah رضى الله عنه reports that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: "Four types of people are, when they begin their day, under the wrath of Allah and when they reach their evenings they are under the rage of Allah." I asked: "Who are they, O Messenger of Allah?" He said: "Men who imitate women and women who imitate men and he who goes unto animals and he who goes unto men". (op. cit.)

وعن ابن عباس رضى الله عنهما قال: قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم : من وجدتموه يعمل عمل قوم لوط فاقتلوا الفاعل والمفعول به .

As narrated by Sayyidna Ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنهما , the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: "If you find someone doing what the people of Lot did, kill both the doer and the one with whom it is done. (op. cit.)

In At-Targhīb wat-Tarhīb cited above, Ḥāfiẓ Zakī al-Dīn has said that four caliphs, Sayyidnā Abū Bakr, Sayyidnā 'Alī, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Zubayr and Hishām ibn 'Abdul-Mālik رحمهم الله تعالى had condemned those guilty of sodomy to the fire. In this connection, he has also related, on the authority of Muḥammad ibn Al-Munkadir, an event to the effect that Sayyidnā Khālid ibn Walīd رضى الله عنه wrote a letter to Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضى الله عنه reporting that there was a man in a certain Arabian locality with whom they did what is done with women. Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضى الله عنه called a meeting of the noble Companions, - Sayyidnā 'Alī رضى الله عنه being one of them. He said that a sin like that was not committed by any human group except one, and they all knew how Allah Almighty dealt with those people. He proposed that the man be condemned to fire. Other Companions concurred and Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضى الله عنه decreed accordingly.

In the *Ḥadīth* narrations quoted above, the act of the people of Lūṭ has been repeatedly mentioned. The reference is to the people to whom Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليه السلام (Lot) was sent as their prophet. Apart from their disbelief in the Divine Message and the Messenger, and their ascribing all sorts of partners to Allah, they were also addicted to this abominably unnatural practice. When the preachings and teachings of Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليه السلام had no effect on them, the angels acted as commanded by Allah Almighty. They physically lifted the habitations of these people off the ground, then a flip upside down, and down they threw the whole thing back on the ground. Details will, *Inshallāh*, appear in the Commentary on Sūrah al-A'rāf.

The *ḥadīth* narrations given above related to homosexual act. There are other narrations which carry the severest of warnings against indulging in the unnatural act (anal intercourse) with women:

عن ابن عباس رضى الله عنهما أن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم قال:
لاينظر الله عز وجل إلى رجل اتى رجلاً أو امرأة فى دبرها

Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه narrates that the Holy Prophet

صلى الله عليه وسلم said: "Allah Almighty does not look (mercifully) at the man who commits anal intercourse with a man or woman."

عن خزيمة بن ثابت قال: قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: ان الله لايستحى من الحق، ثلاث مرات، لا تأتوا النساء فى أدبارهن

Sayyidnā Khuzaimah ibn Thābit رضى الله عنه says that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said : Allah does not get embarrassed by stating the truth. He said this thrice. Then, he said: "Do not go unto women anally."

وعن أبى هريرة رضى الله عنه أن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم قال: ملعون من أتى امرأة فى دبرها

Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضى الله عنه narrates that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: "Cursed is he who goes unto women anally." (At-Targhib wat-Tarhib)

وعنه أن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم قال: من اتى حائضاً أو امرأة فى دبرها أوكاهنًا فصدّقه، فقد كفر بما انزل على محمد صلى الله عليه وسلم.

He also narrates that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: "One who goes unto a woman in menstruation, or in her anus or goes to a soothsayer (*kāhin*) and accepts his statement relating to the unknown, then, such people have rejected what was revealed to Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وسلم."

As for a fixed punishment for this evil act, there is a difference of opinion among Muslim jurists, details of which are available in books of *Fiqh*. Nevertheless, the nature of such punishments reported by them is as severe as it can be, such as, burning into fire, bashing under a wall felled over, throwing down from a height, stoning and beheading with a sword.

Verses 17 - 18

إِنَّمَا التَّوْبَةُ عَلَى اللّٰهِ لِلَّذِيْنَ يَعْمَلُوْنَ السُّوْٓءَ بِجَهَالَةٍ ثُمَّ يَتُوْبُوْنَ مِنْ قَرِيْبٍ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ يَتُوْبُ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِمْ ۗ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ عَلِيْمًا حَكِيْمًا ﴿١٧﴾ وَلَيْسَتِ التَّوْبَةُ لِلَّذِيْنَ يَعْمَلُوْنَ السَّيِّاٰتِ ۚ

حَتّٰىٓ اِذَا حَضَرَ اَحَدَهُمُ الْمَوْتُ قَالَ اِنِّىْ تُبْتُ الْـٰٔنَ وَلَا الَّذِيْنَ
يَمُوْتُوْنَ وَهُمْ كُفَّارٌ ۭ اُولٰۗىِٕكَ اَعْتَدْنَا لَهُمْ عَذَابًا اَلِيْمًا ﴿١٨﴾

The relenting taken by Allah upon Himself if for those who do evil in ignorance then repent shortly there after. So, Allah relents towards them. And Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise. [17]

And the relenting is not for those who do the evil deeds until when the time of death approaches one of them, he says, "Now I repent", nor for those who die while they are still disbelievers. For them We have prepared a painful punishment. [18]

Repentance was mentioned in the previous verse. Now, given in the present two verses are conditions under which repentance is or is not accepted.

Commentary

Repentance from a deliberate sin

At this point, it should be noted that the Holy Qur'ān has used the words "in ignorance" which apparently gives an impression that the repentance may be accepted when a sin is committed unintentionally and unknowingly. But if it is committed deliberately, it will not be acceptable. However, according to the explanation of this verse given by the noble Companions, may Allah be pleased with them all, the word, "*jahālah*" (ignorance) here does not mean that a sinning person is not aware of a sin as sin, or has no intention or volition to commit a sin. Instead, it means that it was the insensitivity and heedlessness of a person towards the evil end of sin and its ultimate punishment which became the cause of his audacity to venture into sin, even though he knew a sin as sin, and had approached it with intention and volition as well.

In other words, the word, "*jahālah*" or ignorance used here is in the sense of carelessness or stupidity. This is supported by an evidence in Sūrah Yūsuf. Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام (Joseph) had said to his brothers: هَلْ عَلِمْتُمْ مَّا فَعَلْتُمْ بِيُوْسُفَ وَاَخِيْهِ اِذْ اَنْتُمْ جٰهِلُوْنَ Here the brothers have been called, "*jāhilūn*", the ignorant ones, although what they did was not the outcome of any error or forgetfulness but they had done that know-

ingly and with full deliberation. Yet, it is because of their heedlessness towards the evil end of their act that they have been called "*jāhil*" (ignorant).

Abū al-'Āliyah and Qatādah report that the noble Companions, may Allah be pleased with them all, agreed that كل ذنب اصابه عبد فهو جهالة عمدا كان أوغيره , that is, 'any sin committed by a servant of Allah is, anyway, an act of ignorance, be it deliberate or otherwise.'

The master of exegesis, Mujāhid said: كل عامل بمعصية الله فهو جاهل حين عملها "Every one who is doing anything in disobedience to Allah is, for that matter, ignorant while doing it," even though, on the outside, he may appear to be a person of great learning. (Ibn Kathīr)

In his Tafsīr, al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ, Abū Ḥayyān has said: "This is just like what has been reported in a *ḥadīth* - لايزنى الزانى وهو مؤمن , that is, 'a person who commits *zinā* (adultery) will not be doing so while in a state of being a true Muslim.' It means that the time when he succumbed to the temptation of this evil act, that was the time when he was flung far off from the demand of his faith. For this reason, Sayyidnā 'Ikrimah said : امور الدنيا كلها جهالة , that is, 'everything one does in this mortal world - outside the framework of obedience to Allah - is ignorance.' The logic is very obvious since the person disobeying Allah is preferring short-lived pleasures over those ever-lasting; and, anyone who takes the punishment which will last for ever and ever in exchange for this short-lived series of pleasures cannot be called rational, sensible or smart. Such a person would be universally termed as ignorant, even if he knows the evil of his act and has all the intention and resolve to go ahead with it.

The gist of the discussion so far is that the sin that a man commits, deliberately or mistakenly, gets committed due to nothing but '*jihālat*' or ignorance. Therefore, there is a consensus of the entire Muslim *ummah* on the principle that the repentance of a person who commits some sin deliberately can also be accepted. (al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ)

Incidentally, there is another point worth attention in the present verse which prescribes a condition for the acceptance of repentance - that one should repent soon without delaying it. The Qur'ānic words are: "Shortly thereafter." What does "shortly" signify and how much

time will come within the limit of "shortly"? The Holy Prophet ﷺ has himself explained this in a *ḥadīth* in the following words: إِنَّ اللهَ يَقْبَلُ تَوْبَةَ الْعَبْدِ مَالَمْ يُغَرْغِرْ. The *ḥadīth* means that Allah Almighty accepts the repentance of His servant until the time he passes into the throes of death and his soul struggles to get out of his rattling throat.

Muḥaddith Ibn Marduwayh has narrated from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar رضى الله عنه that he heard the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم saying: 'A believing servant of Allah who repents from his sin a month before his death, or repents a day or a moment earlier, Allah Almighty shall accept his repentance, the condition being that the repentance should be genuine and sincere. (Ibn Kathīr)

In short, the explanation of "*min qarīb*" (shortly thereafter) given by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم himself tells us that virtually man's whole life-time comes under "*qarīb*" and, as such, any repentance which is offered well before death shall be acceptable. However, the repentance made by man while in throes of death is not acceptable. Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thānavī in his Tafsīr Bayān al-Qur'ān, has elaborated the subject by saying that man faces two conditions when close to death. Firstly, there is the condition of utter hopelessness when all medicines and efforts fail and man comes to realize that death is round the corner. This is known as the state of "بأس" i.e., conscious suffering. The second condition relates to what comes after, that is, when the pangs of the departure of human soul begin and the fated time of *ghargharah* (the onomatopoetic rattling sound emerging from the throat, a herald of approaching death) comes close. This is known as the state of يأس i.e., total despair. The first condition, that is, the condition of conscious suffering comes within the sense of "*min qarīb*" and the repentance made at that time is accepted; but, the repentance in the second condition, that is, the condition of total despair, is not acceptable, for this is a condition when the angels and things belonging to the Hereafter may start appearing before the dying person, and they are not included in the sense of "*min qarīb*".

This explanation given by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been pointed out by the Holy Qur'ān itself in the following verse (i.e. verse 18) where it is expressly mentioned that repenting, after the sure signs of death are visible, is not accepted.

So, in the light of this explanation the addition of "*min qarīb*" (shortly thereafter) in this verse serves to indicate that the very life-span of man is limited in time, and death, which he may think is far away, may actually be quite near.

"Relenting taken by Allah upon Himself" is a form of promise the fulfillment of which is certain. Otherwise the truth is that Allah Almighty does not necessarily owe anything to anyone.

The second verse (18) describes those whose repentance is not acceptable with Allah, those who fearlessly go on committing sins throughout their entire lives yet, when death stands on their head and the withdrawal of their soul is set in motion and the angels of death start becoming visible, they start offering repentance. How could their repentance become acceptable when they kept running wild with their lives and wasted all opportunities of repenting while there was still time to repent. This is very much like Pharaoh and his people who called out while drowning that they were ready to believe in the Lord of *Mūsā* (Moses) and *Ḥārûn* (Aaron). Naturally, they were told that their declaration of faith at that time was of no consequence, because the time set for it was all over.

The same thing has been pointed out in the last sentence of the verse which says that Allah also does not accept the repentance of those who die while they are still disbelievers. What is the worth of a declaration of faith right in the middle of one's match with death facing the pangs of the withdrawal of the soul from the body? This confession or this declaration of faith is out of tune with the time and quite worthless now as their punishment stands prepared for them.

What is repentance?

After the literal explanation of these two verses, it seems necessary to define *Taubah* or repentance and determine its real nature and status. In his 'Iḥyā' al-'Ulūm, Imām al-Ghazālī has identified three different situations with regard to committing sins:

The first state is that of total sinlessness, that is, no sin has ever been committed. This is either the hallmark of angels or that of the prophets, may peace be on them. The second stage of getting involved in sin comes when one takes the initiative and ventures into sin and then repeats and persists with it, never feeling ashamed or regretful

and never thinking of stopping and abandoning it. This is the degree of the satans and the devils. The third station belongs to human beings, the children of Adam who, immediately after having committed a sin, regret it and resolve firmly not to go near it in future.

This tells us that failing to repent after committing a sin is the style of devils exclusively. Therefore, it is the consensus of the entire Muslim *ummah* that *Taubah* is obligatory. The Holy Qur'ān says:

يَاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا تُوْبُوْٓا اِلَى اللّٰهِ تَوْبَةً نَّصُوْحًا ط عَسٰى رَبُّكُمْ اَنْ يُّكَفِّرَ عَنْكُمْ سَيِّاٰتِكُمْ وَيُدْخِلَكُمْ جَنّٰتٍ تَجْرِىْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ

(O those who believe, repent before Allah, a sincere repentance; may be your Lord removes from you your sins and admits you to gardens beneath which rivers flow.) (66:8)

How generous is the mercy of our Lord! A man spends a whole lifetime in disobeying Him. Nevertheless, when he repents sincerely before his death, not only his sins are forgiven, but he receives much more when he is admitted into the circle of favoured servants of Allah and made an inheritor of Paradise.

In a *ḥadīth*, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been reported to have said: اَلتَّائِبُ حَبِيْبُ اللّٰهِ وَالتَّائِبُ مِنَ الذَّنْبِ كَمَنْ لَّاذَنْبَ لَهٗ that is, 'one who repents from sin is loved by Allah and one who has repented from sin is like one who had never committed a sin.' (Ibn Mājah)

According to some narrations, if a servant of Allah repents from a sin and his repentance finds acceptance with Him, he is not only absolved from having to account for it, but the very record in writing posted by the angels is erased out from his book of deeds so that he may not be disgraced either.

However, what is necessary is that the repentance is genuine and is offered in sincerity. This repentance stands on three pillars. Firstly, one should regret over and feel ashamed about what he or she has done. According to *ḥadīth*, اِنَّمَا التَّوْبَةُ النَّدَمُ, that is, '*Taubah* is (another name of) remorse'. Secondly, one should immediately leave off the sin he has committed and he should, for the future too, firmly resolve to stay away from it. Thirdly, one should think of making amends for what has gone by, that is, he should try to take measures to rectify what

has happened in sin to the best of his ability. For example, if he has missed a prayer or a fast, he should make up for it by doing what is known as *qaḍā* (compensatory worship). If one does not remember the correct number of such missed prayers and fasts, he should think, calculate and come to an estimated number and then go on to offer *qaḍā* for these in all seriousness. If one finds it impossible to do so all at one time, he could offer, with each *ṣalāh* due at its time, one *qaḍā* of each *ṣalāh* he missed throughout his life, which is commonly known as *'umrī qaḍā*. In the same way, one should do his best to make up, as and when convenient, for obligatory fasts he missed by offering *qaḍā* fasts. May be one has not paid the obligatory *zakāh* due on him; he should, then pay the *zakāh* due on him for previous years as well, paying it all or paying it gradually. God forbid, if one has usurped someone's right, he should return it back to him and if he has hurt someone, he should seek his forgiveness. But, should it be that one does not regret what he has done, or, despite being regretful, he does not leave off that sin for future, then, this repentance is no repentance even though it may be said a thousand times, as so delightfully put in verse by a Persian poet:

توبه برلب سبحه برکف دل پُر از ذوقِ گناه
معصیت راخنده می آید از استغفارِ ما

Repentance on the lips, rosary in hand
and a heart full of the taste of sin
Sin laughs at my style of seeking forgiveness!

The point being made here is that man, once he repents as stated earlier, and despite having been in all sorts of sins, becomes a servant dear to Allah. And should it ever be that, out of human weakness, one does fall into sin yet another time, he should immediately renew his repentance in the fond hope that this time, like every other time, Allah Almighty shall, being Most-Forgiving, relent towards him. Let me conclude with yet another Persian couplet which says:

این درگهِ ما درگهِ نومیدی نیست صد بار اگر توبه شکستی باز آ

This is the Court of My Presence,
not the Court of Despair.
Even if you have broken (the promise in) your repentance
a hundred times, come again!

Verses 19 - 21

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا يَحِلُّ لَكُمْ اَنْ تَرِثُوا النِّسَآءَ كَرْهًا ؕ وَلَا
تَعْضُلُوْهُنَّ لِتَذْهَبُوْا بِبَعْضِ مَاۤ اٰتَيْتُمُوْهُنَّ اِلَّاۤ اَنْ يَّاْتِيْنَ
بِفَاحِشَةٍ مُّبَيِّنَةٍ ۚ وَعَاشِرُوْهُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ ۚ فَاِنْ كَرِهْتُمُوْهُنَّ
فَعَسٰۤى اَنْ تَكْرَهُوْا شَيْـًٔا وَّيَجْعَلَ اللّٰهُ فِيْهِ خَيْرًا كَثِيْرًا ﴿۱۹﴾
وَاِنْ اَرَدْتُّمُ اسْتِبْدَالَ زَوْجٍ مَّكَانَ زَوْجٍ ۙ وَّاٰتَيْتُمْ اِحْدٰىهُنَّ قِنْطَارًا
فَلَا تَاْخُذُوْا مِنْهُ شَيْـًٔا ؕ اَتَاْخُذُوْنَهٗ بُهْتَانًا وَّاِثْمًا مُّبِيْنًا ﴿۲۰﴾
وَكَيْفَ تَاْخُذُوْنَهٗ وَقَدْ اَفْضٰى بَعْضُكُمْ اِلٰى بَعْضٍ وَّاَخَذْنَ مِنْكُمْ
مِّيْثَاقًا غَلِيْظًا ﴿۲۱﴾

O those who believe, it is not lawful for you that you should forcibly take women as inheritance. And do not hold on to them so that you may get away with some of what you have given them, unless they commit a clearly shameful act. And live with them in the recognized manner. And if you dislike them, then it is quite likely that you dislike something and Allah has placed in it a lot of good. [19]

If you want to take a wife in place of the one (you have), and you have given her a lot, then do not take back anything from it through imputation and open sin? [20]

And how can you take it when you have had access to each other and they have taken a firm covenant from you. [21]

Sequence of verses

Repentance was mentioned in the previous verses in proportion to the related requirement of the text. Before this, there was a series of injunctions pertaining to women. The present verses too carry some more imperatives against the excesses suffered by women at the hands of their husbands, even heirs. Details appear in the Commentary.

The aim is to correct such social disorders. It may be noted that husbands have been particularly addressed in عَاشِرُوْهُنَّ (live with them).

Verses 20 and 21 conclude the subject.

Commentary

Women before Islam: Eradication of Injustices

Given in these three verses are steps taken to eliminate injustices to which women were commonly subjected:

1. The most glaring of these was that men used to act as owners of the life and property of women, so much so, that a woman taken in marriage was passed on as a piece of property after her husband's death, on to his heirs. They were considered as the new owners and inheritors of the property, plus the wife. They could, if they wished to, marry her or give her in marriage to somebody else against payment. The son of the husband from another wife could himself marry her after the death of his father. When a living human being has been taken as an article of ownership, what would have happened to the normal property is all too obvious. This one basic social ill became the cause of hundreds of other unjust practices against women, some of which are pointed out below:

(a) If a woman received some property in inheritance or some gift from her parents, the poor thing stayed deprived of it. Everything received in her name was devoured by men at her husband's home.

(b) If, somehow the woman did come in possession of her share of the property, men would prevent her from remarrying so that she could not take her share out of the house - they wanted her to die right there where she was, leaving her property which they could possess after her.

(c) In some places there was the practice that if the husband did not like his wife because of whimsical factors and not because of any shortcoming of the wife, then, while he skipped relating to her as his wife, did not get rid of her by giving her a divorce. This was to harass her to the limit that she was forced to give him back the jewellery and dower money he had given her; or, if he had not yet given these as due, he expected that she would forgo her claim before she could hope to be released. There were situations when the husband, despite having divorced her would not let the divorced wife remarry so that she breaks up and returns to him the amount of dower he had given her,

or forgoes the dower still unpaid.

(d) On occasions, following the death of her husband, his heirs would not let the widow remarry. They would do so either to satisfy their false sense of prestige, or to let her go only after they get something for themselves in the deal.

As said earlier, all these injustices were perpetrated on the basis of the central assumption that man owned not only the property but also the very life of the woman. The Holy Qur'ān struck at the very root of this evil which produced other injustices and openly declared:

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا يَحِلُّ لَكُمْ اَنْ تَرِثُوا النِّسَآءَ كَرْهًا

> O those who believe, it is not lawful for you that you should forcibly take women as inheritance.

The word "forcibly" does not appear here as a condition which would have given the impression that their becoming owners of women with the later's approval was all right, but this restriction has been introduced here as a statement of fact. It means that taking over the charge of the life and property of women as self-appointed owners without any legal or rational basis whatsoever could, obviously, be only "forcibly". How could a woman, in her normal senses, ever agree to such a proposition? (al-Bahr al-Muḥīṭ). This is why the Sharī'ah of Islam does not accept her approval in this matter as effective. If any woman, so out of her mind, approves of being owned by somebody, the Islāmic law is not willing to concede this position.

The common method of preventing injustice and disorder would be to use a prohibitive order, but the Holy Qur'ān has avoided this common method at this place and has expressed the element of prohibition by negating the lawfulness of this act by saying: لَا يَحِلُّ لَكُمْ , 'it is not lawful for you'. Here, in addition to stressing upon the severe sinfulness of this matter, the purpose may also be to indicate that, should it be that someone does go on to marry an adult woman without her consent and permission, the marriage thus entered into shall not be lawful and, in fact, it is null and void. Being totally *non-sequitur*, no husband-wife relationship between the man and woman gets established from such a marriage, nor do the injunctions of inheritance or lineage follow from it.

Similarly, if someone forces a woman and takes back the dower he had given her, or compels her to forgo the outstanding dower, this forced return or forgiveness is not valid in the sight of the Sharī'ah. Money or property taken in this manner do not make them lawful for the man, nor does it cause any due right to be forgiven. This subject has been further clarified in: وَلَا تَعۡضُلُوۡهُنَّ لِتَذۡهَبُوۡا بِبَعۡضِ مَاۤ اٰتَيۡتُمُوۡهُنَّ.

It means: 'Do not prevent women from marrying at their choice with the intention of taking back what you, or a relative, have already given to them as dower or gift.' So, the giving and the taking back of dower is inclusive of the incidence of making the woman forgive the dower the payment of which is due, fixed and agreed upon. Whether one forces the woman to return the dower amount already paid or forces her to forgo the dower still outstanding, both are impermissible and patently *ḥarām* (forbidden). Similarly, whatever has been given to the wife as gift, or something of which she has become the 'owner', cannot be taken back by the husband, or the heirs, for it is not lawful for them to do so. However, this rule applies only to a situation where anything has been assigned to her as an owner. If something was given to her for a temporary use, like jewellery or any other article, not making her the owner of it, then, that simply does not enter into the 'ownership' of the wife and, therefore, asking for their return is not forbidden.

The text, after that, by saying: اِلَّاۤ اَنۡ يَّاۡتِيۡنَ بِفَاحِشَةٍ مُّبَيِّنَةٍ exempts some such situations under which it becomes permissible for the husband to take back what he has given, including the dower. It means that should the woman commit an act which is clearly shameful and which naturally compels the man to divorce her, then, this will be a situation in which it does not matter if the husband holds back the word of divorce until such time that the woman returns the dower he had given her or forgoes the outstanding dower, if that is the case.

According to Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ, Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی اللہ عنہا and Haḍrat Ḍaḥḥāk رحمہ اللہ and others, the word, *"fāhisha"* (translated as 'a shameful act') here means disobedience to the husband and indecent abuses against him; while, Abū Qilābah and Ḥasan al-Baṣrī رحمہ اللہ take it to mean immodesty and adultery in this particular place. Thus, the sense would come to be: If these women

happen to commit some shameful act or they behave disobediently and vituperatively which forces the husband to think of a divorce, then, this being a fault of the woman, the husband has the right to hold her in the bond of marriage, until he receives back what he had given her, or has the outstanding dower forgiven by her.

The next two verses (20, 21) also enlarge upon this subject. Here it has been said that, should it be that the woman has just not shown any contumacy or immodesty, but the husband, following his own physical desire and pleasure, intends to marry another woman in her place, then again it will not be permissible for him to claim anything from her in exchange of divorce, even though he had given her a lot of wealth. Similarly, it will not be allowed for him to force her to forgo the dower due against him. This is because there is no fault of the woman and the cause which makes the dower due and payable has been vacated, that is, they have been married and have had their privacy with each other. Now, the husband has no right to take back what he has given her or make her forgo the dower.

That the taking back of this amount is an injustice and sin has been later on described in three stages.

First, it was said: أَتَأْخُذُونَهُ بُهْتَانًا وَإِثْمًا مُّبِينًا that is, 'do you want to take it through imputation and an open sin?"

This sentence refers back to the previous verse (19) where it was laid down that the husband has no right to take back the dower from his wife except when she has committed a shameful act. On the basis of this principle the present verse (20) says that if you take back the dower from your wife, it will mean that you are imputing her for a shameful act, because it is the only situation where your claim may be rightful. Since your wife has not committed a shameful act, your claim to the dower is a false imputation which is an open sin.

Secondly, in the following sentence in verse 21, it was said: وَكَيْفَ تَأْخُذُونَهُ وَقَدْ أَفْضَىٰ بَعْضُكُمْ إِلَىٰ بَعْضٍ that is, how can you now take back what you had given her when not only the marriage has been solemnized, but you have also had access to each other in privacy? For, in this situation, whatever has been given, if against dower, the woman certainly deserved it. She now owns it because she surrendered herself to her

husband. The idea that it could be returned is senseless. Even if this money or property given by the husband was presented or gifted, even then, it is not possible that it could be returned because what a husband and wife give to each other as gift cannot be taken back. Such claim of its return is neither permissible in Sharī'ah, nor is it legally enforced. So, marital bond prevents the taking back of what has been given as gift.

The same subject has been stated in the last sentence of verse 21: واخذن منكم ميثاقا غليظا (and they have taken a firm covenant from you). This 'covenant' is the bond of marriage which is solemnly attested to with the name of Allah before a gathering of people following a *khuṭbah*.

To sum up, once this marital covenant has been made and mutual privacy has brought the couple close together, to force the woman to return what was given to her is open injustice and tyranny. All Muslims must abstain from it.

Verses 22 - 24

وَلَا تَنْكِحُوا مَا نَكَحَ اٰبَآؤُكُمْ مِّنَ النِّسَآءِ اِلَّا مَا قَدْ سَلَفَ ؕ اِنَّهٗ
كَانَ فَاحِشَةً وَّمَقْتًا ؕ وَسَآءَ سَبِيْلًا ﴿٢٢﴾ حُرِّمَتْ عَلَيْكُمْ
اُمَّهٰتُكُمْ وَبَنٰتُكُمْ وَاَخَوٰتُكُمْ وَعَمّٰتُكُمْ وَخٰلٰتُكُمْ وَبَنٰتُ الْاَخِ
وَبَنٰتُ الْاُخْتِ وَاُمَّهٰتُكُمُ الّٰتِيْۤ اَرْضَعْنَكُمْ وَاَخَوٰتُكُمْ مِّنَ
الرَّضَاعَةِ وَاُمَّهٰتُ نِسَآئِكُمْ وَرَبَآئِبُكُمُ الّٰتِيْ فِيْ حُجُوْرِكُمْ مِّنْ
نِّسَآئِكُمُ الّٰتِيْ دَخَلْتُمْ بِهِنَّ ز فَاِنْ لَّمْ تَكُوْنُوْا دَخَلْتُمْ بِهِنَّ فَلَا
جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ ز وَحَلَآئِلُ اَبْنَآئِكُمُ الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ اَصْلَابِكُمْ لا وَاَنْ
تَجْمَعُوْا بَيْنَ الْاُخْتَيْنِ اِلَّا مَا قَدْ سَلَفَ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ غَفُوْرًا
رَّحِيْمًا ﴿٢٣﴾ وَّالْمُحْصَنٰتُ مِنَ النِّسَآءِ اِلَّا مَا مَلَكَتْ اَيْمَانُكُمْ
كِتٰبَ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَاُحِلَّ لَكُمْ مَّا وَرَآءَ ذٰلِكُمْ اَنْ تَبْتَغُوْا
بِاَمْوَالِكُمْ مُّحْصِنِيْنَ غَيْرَ مُسٰفِحِيْنَ ؕ فَمَا اسْتَمْتَعْتُمْ بِهٖ مِنْهُنَّ
فَاٰتُوْهُنَّ اُجُوْرَهُنَّ فَرِيْضَةً ؕ وَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِيْمَا تَرٰضَيْتُمْ

بِهٖ مِنۢ بَعۡدِ الۡفَرِيۡضَةِ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ عَلِيۡمًا حَكِيۡمًا ﴿٢٤﴾

And do not marry those of women whom your fathers had married except what has passed. It is indeed shameful and detestable, and it is an evil practice. [22]

Prohibited for you are your mothers, your daughters, your sisters, your paternal aunts, your maternal aunts, daughters of brother, daughters of sister, your mothers who suckled you, your sisters through suckling, mothers of your wives and your step-daughters under your care who are born of your women with whom you have had intercourse - but if you have not had intercourse with them, then there is no sin on you. And the wives of your sons from your loins, and that you combine two sisters (in wedlock), except what has passed. Surely, Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful.[23]

(And also prohibited are) the women already bound in marriage, except the bondwomen you come to own. It has been written by Allah for you. All except them have been permitted for you to seek (to marry) through your wealth, binding yourself, (in marriage) and not only for lust. So, whoever of them you have benefited from, give them their due as obligated. And there is no sin on you in what you mutually consent to after the (initial) settlement. Surely, Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise. [24]

The present verses are an extension of the description of evil practices common in *Jāhiliyyah* which have been taken up earlier. A detailed discussion appears in the Commentary.

Commentary:

These verses give details of *muḥarramāt*, that is, women with whom marriage is prohibited. Some of them are prohibited for ever, never becoming lawful under any condition. Some are not permanently prohibited. They become lawful under some particular circumstances.

There are three kinds of permanently-prohibited women referred to in the first category. They are those by kinship, by fosterage and by relationship through marriage, and are permanently prohibited. The kind mentioned at the end remains prohibited until they are bound in marriage with someone else.

An explanation of the verses follows with relevant part of the verse appearing in the lead:

وَلَا تَنْكِحُوا مَا نَكَحَ اٰبَآؤُكُمْ (And do not marry those of women whom your fathers had married) (verse 22): During the days of *Jāhiliyyah,* people had no qualms when they went ahead and married the wife of their father after his death. In this verse, Allah Almighty has prohibited this shameful practice; an evil which invites His wrath. How can someone keep calling a woman his mother for a long time and yet stoop so low as to make her his wife after the death of the father?

Ruling:

1. Marrying the legally wedded wife of the father has been declared unlawful in this noble verse. There is no restriction here to indicate marital consummation by the father. So, the fact that the father has married a woman is enough to forbid the son from entering into marriage with that woman. It will never be lawful. Similarly, it is not correct for the father to marry the wife of his son, even if the marriage of the son is limited to formal '*nikāḥ*' and his wife has not yet come to live with him. (Ibn 'Abidīn)

2. If the father has fallen into illicit relations with some woman, even then it will not be permissible for the son to marry that woman.

حُرِّمَتْ عَلَيْكُمْ اُمَّهٰتُكُمْ (Prohibited for you are your mothers): It means that it is unlawful to marry one's own mother and the word, "*ummahātukum*" (your mothers), includes all grandmothers, paternal or maternal.

وَبَنٰتُكُمْ (and your daughters) means that it is unlawful to marry one's own real daughter, and the daughter of the daughter, and the daughter of the son.

In short, marrying a daughter, grand-daughter, great-grand-daughter; maternal grand-daughter, great-grand-daughter is all unlawful. As for marrying a step-daughter, from a different husband, whom the wife has brought with her, there are details which will appear later. As regards the son or daughter who are not real but have been adopted, it is permissible to marry them or their offspring, subject to the provision that such marriage is not unlawful due to some other consideration. Similarly, if a person fathers a daughter by

indulging in *zinā* with a woman, the girl thus born will be governed by the rule which applies to a daughter and marriage with her too will not be correct.

وَاَخَوٰتُكُمْ (and your sisters): Marrying one's own real sister is unlawful, as well as marrying an *'allātī* sister (half-sister from the same father but different mother), and also marrying an *akhyāfī* sister (half-sister from the same mother but different father).

وَعَمّٰتُكُمْ (and your paternal aunts): Marriage with the real sister of one's father, his half-sister from their father's side and his half-sister from their mother's side is unlawful. It means that one cannot marry any paternal aunt from the three kinds described above.

وَخٰلٰتُكُمْ (and your maternal aunts): Marriage with a sister of one's mother, whether real (*ḥaqīqī*) or half-sister from their father's side (*'allātī*) or half-sister from their mother's side (*akhyāfī*), is unlawful.

وَبَنٰتُ الْاَخِ (and daughters of brother): It means that marriage with one's nieces is also unlawful, whether they be *ḥaqīqī, 'allātī* or *akhyāfī.* Marriage with the daughters of all three types of brothers, real or half, as given above, is not lawful.

وَبَنٰتُ الْاُخْتِ (and daughters of sister): It means that marriage with one's maternal nieces is also unlawful, whether the sisters be *ḥaqīqī* or *'allātī* or *akhyāfī.* The daughters of such sisters cannot be taken in marriage.

وَاُمَّهٰتُكُمُ الّٰتِيْٓ اَرْضَعْنَكُمْ (and your mothers who suckled you): This refers to women who, even though they are not the real mothers, are treated in Sharī'ah like mothers in the sense that marriage with them is as prohibited as with one's real mother. The quantity or the frequency of feed makes no difference; the said unlawfulness stands established under all eventualities. Muslim jurists refer to this as the unlawfulness through fosterage.

However, it is necessary to remember that this unlawfulness through fosterage gets established when suckling takes place at a time which is the usual time for it during childhood. The Holy Prophet ﷺ has said: "إِنَّمَا الرَّضَاعَةُ مِنَ الْمَجَاعَةِ": Fosterage is only from hunger" which means that the unlawfulness that becomes established through suckling shall come into effect only when suckling has taken place at a

time when the child has no other option but to suckle and grow through it. (al-Bukhārī and Muslim)

According to Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, this period ranges between the birth of the child and when he or she is two and a half years old. According to other Muslim jurists which includes his special disciples, Imām Abū Yūsuf and Imām Muḥammad رحمهما الله تعالى the period of suckling is two years only, therefore, if a boy or girl suckles at the breast of a woman after the age of two years, the prohibition of marriage due to fosterage will not come into affect.

وَأَخَوٰتُكُم مِّنَ الرَّضَاعَةِ (and your sisters through suckling): It means that marriage with sisters related through the bond of fosterage is also unlawful. Going in details, it works out that a woman who suckles a boy or girl during the days of suckling becomes their foster-mother, and her husband becomes their foster-father, and the offspring of that woman become his brothers and sisters, and the sisters of that woman become their maternal aunts, and the elder and younger brothers of her husband become the foster-uncles of these children, and the sisters of the husband of that woman become the paternal aunts of these children; and thus, in between all of them, the relationship of fosterage resulting in prohibition of marriage is established. The marriage which is mutually unlawful as based on the relation of kinship becomes equally unlawful as based on the relation of suckling. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said: يحرم من الرضاعة ما يحرم من الولادة (Bukhārī) (That which becomes unlawful by kinship becomes unlawful by fosterage). Another narration from the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Muslim as in Mishkāt, page 273, says: ان الله حرم من الرضاعة ماحرم من النسب (Surely, Allah has prohibited through fosterage what He has prohibited through kinship.)

Rulings:

1. If a boy and a girl were suckled by a certain woman, the two of them cannot be married to each other. Similarly, marriage with the daughter of a foster-brother and foster-sister is also not possible.

2. Marriage with the lineal mother of foster-brother and foster-sister is permissible. It is also lawful to marry the foster-mother of the lineal sister of foster-sister; and the foster-sister of the lineal sister.

3. The unlawfulness of marriage becomes established if the feed is

received by the child during the days of suckling either through the mouth, or the nose. Should it be that the feed is given to the child by any other inlet, or it is injected in, then, the unlawfulness of fosterage will not come to be established.

4. No feed other than the feed from the woman suckling the child (for example, milk from animals or male humans), establishes fosterage.

5. If the feed is mixed in medicine or in milk from a goat, cow or buffalo, the unlawfulness of marriage as based on suckling shall be established only when the quantity of the woman's feed measures more, or when it is at least equal. But, if the woman's feed is less than that, this unlawfulness shall not come to be established.

6. If male mammalian glands happen to lactate, it does not go on to prove the unlawfulness of marriage from suckling.

7. If a woman lets a child mouth her nipple, but there is no certainty that the child has sucked the feed in, then this will not establish the unlawfulness through suckling and it will not affect the lawfulness of marriage, because the prohibition of marriage is not established where actual suckling is doubtful.

8. If a man marries a certain woman while some other woman claims that she has suckled both of them, then, should both of them confirm it, it will be decided that the marriage was incorrect. However, should both of them reject the claim it will not be mandatory on the spouses to vacate the marriage, however, if the woman appears to be God-fearing and a practicing Muslim, it is preferable for the spouses to opt for separation through divorce.

9. The witness of two practicing Muslims is necessary in order to prove unlawfulness through suckling. This will not be proved by the witness of one man or one woman. But, since this is a very serious matter involving the whole life being *ḥalāl* or *ḥarām* a precautionary attitude will always be advisable. Therefore, some Muslim jurists have ruled that if one intends to marry a woman, and only one practicing Muslim testifies that they are foster brother and sister, it will not be permissible for them to contract marriage. And if the evidence of one witness, male or female, comes forth after they have married each

other, even then, it will be safe and prudent for them to opt for voluntary separation.

10. According to the recognized rules of evidence, the testimony of one man and two women is equal to that of two male witnesses. Therefore, even if one man and two women testify the fact of suckling, the foster-relationship will stand proved.

وَأُمَّهٰتُ نِسَآئِكُمْ (and the mothers of your wives): Also unlawful to husbands are the mothers of their wives. Here too, the word, "*ummahāt*" includes all grandmothers of wives, maternal, paternal, lineal or foster.

Ruling:

1. Just as the mother of a legally wedded wife is unlawful, very similarly, equally unlawful is the mother of a woman with whom one has slept assuming her to be his wife, (while, in fact, she was not his wife) or with whom *zinā* (adultery) has been committed, or who has been touched lustfully.

2. The initial bond or marriage, in itself, renders the mother of one's wife unlawful for him. It means that even if the husband has never slept with his wife, her mother is still unlawful for him to marry.

وَرَبَآئِبُكُمُ الّٰتِىْ فِىْ حُجُوْرِكُمْ مِّنْ نِّسَآئِكُمُ الّٰتِىْ دَخَلْتُمْ بِهِنَّ (and your step-daughters under your care who are born of your women with whom you have had intercourse): When one marries a woman and sleeps with her after the marriage, the daughter of that woman from another husband becomes unlawful for him, and so do her grand-daughters, both paternal and maternal. Marriage with them is not permissible. But, if the husband has not yet slept with his wife and has divorced her after the contract of marriage, then her daughter or grand-daughter will not be unlawful for him. But, following *nikāḥ*, if one touches his wife lustfully, or looks at her private part with sexual desire, then this too, will be taken as having sex with her, therefore, it will make the daughter of that woman unlawful.

The words "your women" used in this context are general. Therefore, it is not the legally wedded wife only whose daughters are unlawful for the husband, but the same rule applies to a woman who

is not really wedded to the person, but he has had sexual intercourse with her either under the wrong impression that she is his wife, or in adultery. The daughter and grand-daughter of such women will also become unlawful for him.

وَحَلَائِلُ اَبْنَائِكُمُ الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ اَصْلَابِكُمْ (and the wives of your sons from your loins): The wife of one's own son is unlawful, and the universality of 'son' includes grandsons, paternal or maternal. So, marriage with their wives shall not be permissible.

مِنْ اَصْلَابِكُمْ (from your loins): This particular restriction is used here to exclude the adopted son. Marriage with his wife is lawful. As far as a foster son is concerned, he is governed by the rule which governs the lineal son, therefore, marriage with his wife too is unlawful.

وَاَنْ تَجْمَعُوْا بَيْنَ الْاُخْتَيْنِ (and that you combine two sisters in wedlock): Also unlawful is the combining of two sisters in the bond of marriage. They may be real sisters or half sisters from the father's side or sisters from the mother's side (*ḥaqīqī, 'allātī, akhyāfī*). They may be sisters by lineage or sisters by fosterage. This rule covers all of them. However, when one sister has been divorced it is permissible to marry another sister, but this permissibility becomes effective only after the period of *'iddah* has expired. Marriage during *'iddah* is not permissible.

Rulings:

1. Just as one cannot combine two sisters in his marriage, it is also unlawful for him to combine a paternal aunt and her niece, and a maternal aunt and her niece. They too cannot be combined in marriage with any one person. As reported in al-Bukhārī and Muslim, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم has said:

لَا يُجْمَعُ بَيْنَ الْمَرْأَةِ وَعَمَّتِهَا وَلَا بَيْنَ الْمَرْأَةِ وَخَالَتِهَا (بخاری و مسلم)

> Do not combine a woman with her paternal aunt, nor a woman with her maternal aunt

2. Muslim jurists have mentioned the general principle that any two women, out of whom, if one was supposed to be a male, then, their marriage with each other would turn out to be incorrect according to Islamic law, thus two women of this kind cannot be combined in marriage with one man.

الا ماقد سلف (except what has passed): It means that whatever has been the practice during *Jāhiliyyah* will not be called to account. These words have also appeared in verse 22. There too, the meaning is the same, that is, that which came to pass during *Jāhiliyyah* has passed. Now that Islam has been embraced, past deeds will not be taken into account, but it is necessary to abstain from them in future.

In the same way, it is necessary at this time of the revelation of what was unlawful that separation be made if one holds the wife of his father, or two sisters, in marriage. In the case of two sisters, it is compulsary that one sister be separated.

As narrated by the blessed Companion, Sayyidnā Barā, Ibn 'Āzib, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had sent Sayyidnā Abū Burdah ibn Niyar to execute a man because he had married the wife of his father. (Mishkāt, p. 274)

Ibn Fīroz Dailamī narrates from his father: 'When I embraced Islam, I had two sisters married to me. I went to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم with the problem.' He said: "Separate by divorcing one and keeping the other." (Mishkāt, p. 274)

These narrations tell us that just as it is not lawful, after embracing Islam, to contract marriage with father's wife or to combine two sisters in marriage, similarly it is also unlawful to maintain such marriages, if they have been contracted by someone before he embraced Islam.

إِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ غَفُوْرًا رَّحِيْمًا (Surely, Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful) means that anything people did erroneously before the advent of Islam will be overlooked by Allah Almighty once they have embraced Islam and they can be sure that He will turn to them with the great reach of His mercy.

وَالْمُحْصَنٰتُ مِنَ النِّسَآءِ (the women already bound in marriage): It means that women having husbands have also been made unlawful. So far as a woman is married to a person, no other person can marry her. From here, it becomes very clear that a woman cannot live with more than one husband simultaneously. There are some ignorant and loud-mouthed people in our time who have started saying - when men are allowed to take more than one wife, women too should have the

permission to enjoy more than one husband. This tasteless bravado is totally contrary to this noble verse. People who indulge in such flippant display of ignorance do not see that plurality of wives is a blessing which has been historically endorsed in all religions and societies. But, for a woman, having more than one husband at the same time is not only a headache for her in person, but it is also disgraceful for those two men who become husbands to one woman. This weird arrangement is not only shameless, but also leaves no possibility of any offspring being born lineally sound. When many men benefit from one woman, there will remain no method of attributing the fatherhood of the child so born to any one of the participating husbands. Such an obnoxious demand can only be made by those who are totally hostile to the graces of humanity, those who have buried their sense of shame once and for all and those who are supporting the movement to deprive human beings of blessings that issue forth from the recognized channel of parents and children bound in a charter of mutual rights. When lineage goes unproved, who is going to be charged with the responsibility of taking care of mutual rights and duties?

Even if this is looked at purely in terms of nature and reason, there seems to be no justification for the provision of several husbands for one woman:

1. The basic purpose of marriage is procreation. Seen from this angle, several women can certainly become pregnant from one man, but one woman cannot become pregnant from several men. She will become pregnant from none but one. What has thus happened is that, given the presence of several husbands, the procreating ability of all husbands, except one, was totally wasted on that count. They ended up with nothing beneficial except the lone satisfaction of their sexual drive.

2. Experience shows that woman is a genre more delicate than man. For a major portion of the year, she does not remain physically amenable to intimacy. There are conditions and circumstances in married life when it is not possible for her to fulfill the rights of even one husband, let alone more than one husband seeking her physical attention.

3. Since man is healthier and stronger in terms of physical power

as compared to woman, man should, if his sexual strength is above average and he cannot find satisfaction by limiting himself to one woman, have the opportunity, of course by permissible means, to marry twice and thrice. If this is not allowed, he will take to impermissible ways of satisfying his desires, and in that process, he will ruin the whole society. But, the likelihood that woman could bring about such ruination is very remote.

This question is so important in the Sharī'ah of Islam that it has not only ruled the second marriage of a woman unlawful when she is already married to someone else, but it also goes farther when it rules that, should the husband of a woman divorce her, or die, she still cannot marry another person until after the expiry of her *'iddah* or waiting period.

إِلَّا مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ (except the bondwomen you come to own): This sentence is an exception from the rule set in وَالْمُحْصَنٰتُ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ (the women already bound in marriage).

It means that it is not permissible that a woman who already has a husband be taken in marriage by another person, unless she comes in the ownership of a person as a bondwoman. This happened when Muslims had to carry out *jihād* against the infidels of *Dār-al-ḥarb* (a non-Muslim state without a treaty of peace with the Muslims). As a result of a valid war with them women prisoners might have been brought to the Islamic state. If their non-Muslim husbands remained behind in their original non-Muslim State, their bond of marriage with them used to be terminated by their entry into the Islamic state, and it was lawful for a Muslim to marry her, if she was a Christian, a Jew or had embraced Islam. Similarly, if the head of the Islamic state opted to make her a bondwoman and had given her to a participant in the war as his share in the spoils, he could also enjoy her company. However, this marriage or enjoyment was permissible only after she goes through at least one menstruation period after her entry into the Islamic state. If it appeared that she was pregnant from her previous husband, it was necessary to wait until she delivers the child.

Rulings:

1. If a disbelieving woman embraces Islam in Dār al-Ḥarb while her husband is a disbeliever, she will be released from the bond of

marriage with him after the expiry of three menstrual periods.

2. If a disbelieving woman embraces Islam in Dār al-Islam and her husband is a disbeliever, then, the local legal authority should induce the husband to think about accepting Islam. If he refuses to become a Muslim, the Muslim judge should bring about a separation between the two. This separation will be taken as the divorce after which, the woman completes her period of *'iddah* and becomes free to marry any Muslim of her choice.

كِتٰبَ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْكُمْ (It has been written by Allah for you): It means that the unlawfulness of marriage with women identified by Allah is something determined by Him.

وَأُحِلَّ لَكُمْ مَّا وَرَآءَ ذٰلِكُمْ (All except them have been permitted for you): It means that women other than those whose unlawfulness has been mentioned upto this point are lawful for you; for example, the daughter of an uncle, the daughter of a maternal aunt, the sister born of a maternal uncle, and the wife of a maternal or paternal uncle - after their death or after they have divorced her - subject to the condition that any other reason of prohibition does not exist. In addition to that, there is the wife of an adopted son who can be lawfully married after he divorces, or dies; so also, if one's wife dies, he can marry her sister - these being some of the many lawful options available. All these have been covered under the generality of مَّا وَرَآءَ ذٰلِكُمْ (All except them).

Ruling:

It is not permissible to have more than four wives simultaneously. Detailed comments on this subject have already appeared in the beginning of Sūrah Al-Nisā'. Not finding any reference to this in the immediate context of the present verses should not lead anyone to misunderstand that, may be, the generality of the Qur'ānic words, مَّا وَرَآءَ ذٰلِكُمْ (All except them) allows unrestricted marriage with women. Besides the women, marriage with whom is unlawful as declared in the Holy Qur'ān, there are several others in this category as mentioned in the noble *Aḥādīth,* indications of which appear in the Qur'ānic verses also and to which we have been pointing out in our comments.

أَنْ تَبْتَغُوْا بِأَمْوَالِكُمْ (that you may seek {to marry} through your wealth):

It means that the description of women unlawful for marriage is there to induce you to look for lawful women with the help of your wealth and enter into marriage with them. In Ahkam al-Qur'an, Abu Bakr al-Jassas رحمة الله عليه writes that this part of the verse tells us two things. Firstly, marriage cannot materialize devoid of dower (even if the parties to marriage decide between themselves that the marriage will take place without dower, still, dower will be necessary, details of which are available in books of *Fiqh*.) Secondly, it tells us that dower (*mahr*) should be something which can be termed as "*mal*" (inclusive of wealth, property, assets etc.) According to the Hanafiyyah, *mahr* (dower) should not be less than ten *dirhams*. One *dirham* is equivalent to 3 1/2x17 grains Troy of silver.

مُّحْصِنِيْنَ غَيْرَ مُسَافِحِيْنَ (binding yourself in marriage, and not only for lust): It means that one should seek lawful women with the help of one's assets and it should be clearly understood that the seeking of women is to safeguard modesty and chastity, which is the crucial purpose of a marriage. And it is through marriage alone that the desired objective has to be achieved and certainly not through spendings to find women for *zina* (fornication). This tells us that, no doubt the fornicators too spend out of their assets, but that spending is patently unlawful, and benefiting from a woman who has been procured by such spending is never lawful. The addition of غَيْرَ مُسَافِحِيْنَ[1] (not for lust) here serves two purposes. As obvious, it forbids *zina* (fornication) while it also points out that the purpose of *zina* is nothing but to run after lust and to waste one's semen for unlawful enjoyment - because it is not aimed at the seeking of children and the preservation of the human race. Muslims must stay chaste investing their strength where it is due in the best interest of human procreation, the method of which is to have a wife in marriage, or a bondwoman - in case one comes to have one.

فَمَا اسْتَمْتَعْتُمْ بِهٖ مِنْهُنَّ فَاٰتُوْهُنَّ اُجُوْرَهُنَّ فَرِيْضَةً (So, whoever of them you have benefited from, give them their due as obligated): 'Benefiting' in this verse refers to coition and it means that the payment of full dower is

1. Literally, it means 'flowing of water' and indicates to seeking ejaculation out of lust. (Editor)

due on the husband only when he had benefited from her company by having sex with her. If, after the initial marriage contract the wife has not come to live with the husband who thus does not get the opportunity to 'benefit' from her company, and he divorces her before having that opportunity, the payment of *mahr* (dower) due against him becomes half. Special attention has been drawn in this verse to the situation when, once this 'benefit' has been received from some woman, the payment of her *mahr* becomes obligatory on all counts. Any shortcoming in doing so is against the letter and spirit of Muslim law. Moreover, the universal human sense of honour dictates that consequent to the purpose of marriage having been achieved, there should be no failing or delaying in giving the wife her due - however, the Sharī'ah gives the woman the additional right that she can, if the *mahr* (dower) is prompt (*mu'ajjal*), refuse to go to her husband until the payment of the *mahr* has been made to her.

The unlawfulness of *Mut'ah*

The root of the Arabic word, إستمتاع : *istimtā'* is ع - ت - م (mīm - tā - 'ain) which means to derive benefit. Any benefit derived from a person or from wealth, property, assets etc. is called *istimtā'*. According to Arabic grammar, the addition of the letters س : *sīn* and ت : *tā* to the root of any word gives the meaning of seeking. Based on this lexical explanation, the simple and straight sense of the Qur'ānic expression, إستمتعتم (you have benefited), as understood by the entire Muslim *ummah* from the revered early elders to their successors and followers, is just what we have stated a little earlier. But, a sect[1] says that it means the conventional *mut'ah* and, according to its adherents, this verse proves that *mut'ah* is *ḥalāl* (lawful). Therefore, it is pertinent here to give a brief account of *mut'ah* and its unlawfulness.

Mut'ah which was in vogue before the advent of Islam was a temporary contract between a man and a woman for having sexual relationship between them for a specified period in exchange of money or a specified kind offered by the man to the woman. This type of contract, which was never meant to create permanent rights and obligations of marriage, was clearly prohibited by the Holy Qur'ān and Sunnah, however, this particular sect claims that it is still *ḥalāl*

1. [i.e. the Shi'ites] (editor).

(permissible). They sometimes seek support to this claim from the present verse just on the ground that the word '*mut'ah*' has been derived from the same root wherefrom the word اِسْتَمْتَعْتُمْ used in this verse has been derived. Obviously, this argument is too far-fetched, and the present verse itself is sufficient to refute it, because before the word اِسْتَمْتَعْتُمْ , the Holy Qur'ān has used the words مُحْصِنِيْنَ غَيْرَ مُسَافِحِيْنَ (binding yourself in marriage and not only for lust) which clearly prove that the sexual relationship approved by the Holy Qur'ān is the only one which aims at chastity through the permanent bond of marriage, and not a relationship based on satisfying lust for a temporary period which has been termed by the Holy Qur'ān as 'flowing water'.

Now, it is obvious that the contract of *mut'ah* has nothing to do with this concept. It neither creates permanent rights and obligations, nor does it bring about a family set-up, nor does it aim at having children and maintain chastity. It is nothing but to satisfy the sexual desire for a short period of time.

As a result, the woman with whom *mut'ah* is done is not given even the status of a wife who could inherit from her very pragmatic counterpart - who, for that matter, does not even have the grace to count her among his recognized wives. The reason is very simple as the purpose here is nothing but sexual gratification, an attitude which drives men and women to keep hunting for ever-new sex-partners in a temporary setting. If this be the state of affairs, *mut'ah* (referred to as temporary marriage) can never be taken as the guarantor of modesty and chastity; it is, on the contrary, its very enemy.

Therefore, the Qur'ānic words مُحْصِنِيْنَ غَيْرَ مُسَافِحِيْنَ are more than enough to rule out the possibility of *mut'ah* being meant by the present verse.

The author of *Hidāyah* has attributed to Imām Mālik that, according to him, *mut'ah* is permissible. But, this attribution is totally incorrect as clarified by the commentator of *Hidāyah* and other respected scholars who say that the author of *Hidāyah* has attributed this view to Imām Mālik inadvertently.

However, there are some of those who claim that Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ believed in the lawfulness of *mut'ah* right upto his later years, although this is not so. Imām al-Tirmidhī, devoting a

chapter to "*mut'ah*", has reported two *aḥādīth*. The first one is as follows:

عن على بن أبى طالب أن النبى صلى الله عليه وسلم نهى عن متعة النساء وعن لحوم الحمرا لأهلية زمن خيبر

'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib رضی اللہ عنہ reports that the Holy Prophet ﷺ on the occasion of the battle of Khyber, prohibited *mut'ah* with women and from (eating) the meat of domestic donkeys.

This *ḥadith* appears in al-Bukhārī and Muslim as well. The second *ḥadīth* reported by Imām al-Tirmidhī is given below:

عن ابن عباس قال: إنما كانت المتعة فى أول الإسلام حتى إذا نزلت الاية الا على ازواجهم اوما ملكت ايمانهم ط قال ابن عباس: فكل فرج سواهما فهو حرام

Ibn 'Abbas رضی اللہ عنہ says: *Mut'ah* was there only in the early period of Islam until the verse - (إِلَّا عَلَىٰ أَزْوَاجِهِمْ أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُهُمْ) - was revealed. Then, he said: All private parts other than these are unlawful (that is other than those of the legally wedded wife and the bondwoman one may come to have).

Nevertheless, this much has to be said that Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ took *mut'ah* to be permissible upto a certain time. Then, it was on the good counsel of Sayyidnā 'Alī رضی اللہ عنہ (as in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, v.1, p.452) and under the chastening impact of the noble verse: إِلَّا عَلَىٰ أَزْوَاجِهِمْ أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُهُمْ that he revoked his earlier position, as indicated in the narration from Tirmidhī.

It is very strange that the sect which believes in the lawfulness of *mut'ah* - despite its claim to love and obey Sayyidnā 'Alī رضی اللہ عنہ - elects to oppose no less a person than him on this particular issue.

The author of Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī reports from Qāḍī 'Ayāḍ that *mut'ah* was lawful before the battle of Khayber, but it was made unlawful during it. After that, it was declared lawful on the day of the Conquest of Makkah, but it was after three days that it was proclaimed as unlawful for ever.

There is yet another point worthy of our attention. The Qur'ānic statement:

وَالَّذِيْنَ هُمْ لِفُرُوْجِهِمْ حَافِظُوْنَ إِلَّا عَلَى أَزْوَاجِهِمْ أَوْمَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُهُمْ فَإِنَّهُمْ غَيْرُ مَلُوْمِيْنَ .

(And those who guard their private parts, save from their wives or from their bondwomen, then, they are not blameworthy).

is so explicit that it admits of no other interpretation. It shows the unlawfulness of *mut'ah* very clearly. Seeking flimsy support from some rare and unauthentic readings is absolutely incorrect.

To sum up our earlier submissions, there is no absolute proof to support the view that the Qur'anic word, إسْتَمْتَعْتُمْ (you have benefited) refers to conventional *mut'ah*. This is just a remote possibility which can never override the absolute proof contained in إِلَّا عَلَى أَزْوَاجِهِمْ أَوْمَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُهُمْ cited above. Specially, keeping in view the well-settled principle of Islamic jurisprudence, that where two arguments or two interpretations are equally possible, the one supporting prohibition is always preferred.

Ruling:

Like *mut'ah*, a time bound marriage is also unlawful. A time-bound marriage (termed in Islamic jurisprudence as *al-nikāḥ al-muwaqqat*) is a marriage entered into for a fixed time. The difference between the two is that *mut'ah* is done by using the words of *mut'ah*. A time-bound marriage is done by saying the word, *nikāḥ* which is normally used for regular marriage.

وَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِيْمَا تَرَاضَيْتُمْ بِهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ الْفَرِيْضَةِ (And there is no sin on you in what you mutually consent to after the {initial} settlement): This sentence in the verse means that *mahr* or dower which has been fixed mutually is not, in the real sense, absolute and definitive, and something to which nothing could be added or deleted. On the contrary, a husband can add something on his own accord on the fixed *mahr,* and the wife too, if she so desires, willingly and happily, can forgo a part of her *mahr,* or the whole of it. The generality of the words also allows a situation where a woman willingly agrees to defer the payment of a dower which was originally settled to be prompt.

إِنَّ اللهَ كَانَ عَلِيْمًا حَكِيْمًا (Surely, Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise): The addition of this sentence towards the end of the verse tells us two things. Firstly, that All knows. He is aware of everything. His injunctions are

there to be complied with. If somebody acts against these and even if a judge, a ruler, or any other human being ever gets to find out about it, Allah, in His most exalted state of being, knows all about this and everything else. One must keep fearing Him under all circumstances. Secondly, that the injunctions He has revealed are all based on *ḥikmah* or wisdom. In essence, *Ḥikmah* (Allah's wisdom) is too deep to be understood by everyone. The injunctions concerning what is unlawful and lawful as given in these verses, whether or not one understands their cause, reason or justification, must be believed in, accepted and obeyed. This is because, even though we may not know the *raison d'etre*, the cause, reason or justification, it hardly matters, for the Creator and the Master of the Command, Allah Almighty certainly knows it all, being the All-Knowing, the Wise.

There are many people, educated but ignorant, visibly spread out in our contemporary Muslim and non-Muslim societies, who go about gopher-like, searching for the causes of Divine injunctions. When they fail to find any, they side-track the need to comply with the injunction by saying that the Word of God was, God-forbid, contrary to the requirements of the modern age, or worse still, unsuitable. The words of the verse have silenced such people for ever by telling them: 'You are ignorant. Your Creator is All-Knowing. You lack understanding. Allah is All-Wise. Do not make your reason the touchstone of the Truth.'

Verse 25

وَمَنْ لَّمْ يَسْتَطِعْ مِنْكُمْ طَوْلًا اَنْ يَّنْكِحَ الْمُحْصَنٰتِ الْمُؤْمِنٰتِ
فَمِنْ مَّا مَلَكَتْ اَيْمَانُكُمْ مِّنْ فَتَيٰتِكُمُ الْمُؤْمِنٰتِ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ اَعْلَمُ
بِاِيْمَانِكُمْ ؕ بَعْضُكُمْ مِّنْۢ بَعْضٍ ۚ فَانْكِحُوْهُنَّ بِاِذْنِ اَهْلِهِنَّ
وَاٰتُوْهُنَّ اُجُوْرَهُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ مُحْصَنٰتٍ غَيْرَ مُسٰفِحٰتٍ وَّلَا
مُتَّخِذٰتِ اَخْدَانٍ ۚ فَاِذَاۤ اُحْصِنَّ فَاِنْ اَتَيْنَ بِفَاحِشَةٍ فَعَلَيْهِنَّ
نِصْفُ مَا عَلَى الْمُحْصَنٰتِ مِنَ الْعَذَابِ ؕ ذٰلِكَ لِمَنْ خَشِيَ
الْعَنَتَ مِنْكُمْ ؕ وَاَنْ تَصْبِرُوْا خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿۲۵﴾

And the one who cannot afford to marry the free Muslim women, then (he may marry) the one you own of the Muslim girls. And Allah knows best about your faith. You are similar to each other. So, marry them with the permission of their masters and give them their dues, as recognized, they being bound in marriage, not going for lust, nor having paramours. So, once they have been bound in marriage, then, if they commit a shameful act, they shall be liable to half of the punishment prescribed for the free women. That is for those of you who fear falling in sin. And that you be patient is better for you. And Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful. [25]

It is in continuation of the injunctions relating to marriage which have been appearing earlier that the text now takes up the option of marriage with bondwomen who qualify as such under the stipulations of the Sharī'ah of Islam. Then, the injunction of *Ḥadd* punishment concerning them has been added along since the status of a bondman and bondwoman is different from a free man and a free woman. Detailed explanation follows.

Commentary

The word, طَوْلًا (*ṭaul*) in the Qur'ānic text signifies power, capability and means. The sense of the verse is that one who does not have the capability or means to marry free Muslim women, can marry Muslim bondwomen. This clearly indicates that one should, as far as possible, marry only a free woman and simply not marry a bondwoman. But, should it be that one has to marry a bondwoman, he should look for a Muslim bondwoman

This is the very juristic position of Imām Abū Hanīfah according to whom marrying a bondwoman, specially a bondwoman from the people of the Book (Jews or Christians) while having the power and means to marry a free woman, is *makrūh* (not desirable)

According to Imām Shāfi'ī and other Imams, marrying a bondwoman while having the power and means to marry a free woman is unlawful (*ḥarām*), and marrying a bondwoman from the people of the Book is absolutely impermissible.

In short, to avoid marrying a bondwoman is, under all conditions,

certainly better for a free man. However, if one has to do so under personal lack of choice, marrying a Muslim bondwoman is better. The reason is that the offspring from a bondwoman becomes automatically bonded to the owner of the bondwoman. Furthermore, there remains the danger that the offspring from the non-Muslim bondwoman could adopt a religion other than Islam following the example of the mother. So, in order to resuce the children from bondage and to ensure that they remain Muslims, it is necessary that the mother of the children should be free. If she is a bondwoman, let her, at the least, be necessarily a Muslim, so that the faith of the child remains secure for future flowering. For this reason, respected scholars have said that marrying a free woman from the people of the Book is, no doubt, correct, but, staying away from doing so is better; and in a time like this, its importance is much too obvious to be emphasized as Jewish and Christian women usually marry Muslim men to influence the husband himself, and his children, into adopting their religion.

This much established, the text then says: وَاللّٰهُ اَعْلَمُ بِاِيْمَانِكُمْ بَعْضُكُمْ مِّنْ بَعْضٍ : It means that Allah is fully aware of your faith, that is, *'Īmān* or faith is the criterion of precedence. It is very likely that a bondman or bondwoman may be far ahead of free men and women on the scale of faith. Therefore, the option of marriage with a Muslim bondwoman should not be taken as absolutely contemptible. Instead the fact that she has faith in Islam should be appreciated. The expression بَعْضُكُمْ مِّنْ بَعْضٍ appearing at the end, translated here as 'you are similar to each other', means that human beings, free or in bondage, all come from one species, the children of Adam and all were born of only one soul. That one is better than the other depends on *'Īmān* (faith) and *Taqwā* (righteous conduct in fear of Allah, the Creator). According to al-Tafsīr al-Maẓharī, 'these two sentence are there for people to get familiarized with and become acceptance-prone to marriage with bondwomen and get rid of any attitude of contempt for such marriage

فَانْكِحُوْهُنَّ بِاِذْنِ اَهْلِهِنَّ وَاٰتُوْهُنَّ اُجُوْرَهُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ (So, marry them with the permission of their masters and give them their dues): It means that, should they refuse to give permission, the marriage of the bondwoman will not be correct because the bondwoman does not possess the control over her person. The same rule governs the bondman as he too cannot marry

without the permission of his master.

Then it was said that one who marries a bondwoman should pay her *mahr* (dower) promptly, honestly and gracefully, that is, without hedging and delaying, and making sure that the payment is made in full, and that no trouble is caused to the bondwoman in this matter just because she happens to be a bondwoman. The juristic position taken by Imām Mālik in this connection is that *mahr* (dower) is the right of the bondwoman. Other Imāms say that the master of the bondwoman is the one who shall become the owner of what is received in payment of the dower of the bondwoman.

مُحْصَنٰتٍ غَيْرَ مُسٰفِحٰتٍ وَّلَا مُتَّخِذٰتِ اَخْدَانٍ (they being bound in marriage, not going for lust, nor having paramours): It means that marriage with Muslim bondwomen should be contracted while they are observers of chastity being neither "*musāfiḥāt*", that is, open fornicators, nor keepers of clandestine paramours. It may be noted that the text, though refers to the seeking of chaste bondwomen for marriage at this place, yet it is also much better to stay away from marrying a fornicating free woman as well.

Since this verse has declared that if one cannot afford to marry a free woman, the second option for him is to marry a bondwoman. This also proves that *mut'ah* (متعہ) is not permissible, because, had *mut'ah* been permissible, a person who could not afford to marry a free woman could have gone for the easiest alternate by doing *mut'ah* [1] as it would have gratified his sexual desire and, in addition to that, the relative financial burden of this deal would have been much less than that of a regular marriage. Furthermore, the Qur'ānic words مُحْصَنٰتٍ غَيْرَ مُسٰفِحٰتٍ identify the trait of the bondwomen - an observer of chastity while being bound in marriage and no fornicator. Now, as far as *mut'ah* is concerned, it is all '*safḥ*', nothing but spillage and rank whoredom. One woman gets used by several men in short spans of time. The offspring, if it comes, cannot be credibly ascribed to anyone. There goes the benefit of procreation. What becomes of the unique reservoir of human strength all such people possess, is simply that the whole thing goes down the drain just to oblige the wanton pursuit of sex.

1. For details see the commentary (on verse 24) in the previous section.

فَإِذَآ أُحْصِنَّ فَإِنْ أَتَيْنَ بِفَاحِشَةٍ فَعَلَيْهِنَّ نِصْفُ مَا عَلَى الْمُحْصَنٰتِ مِنَ الْعَذَابِ : It means that after the bondwomen have been bound in marriage and their observance of chastity has been given a safe cover, if they commit *zinā*, an act of shame, they shall be liable to half of the punishment prescribed for the free women. This refers to unmarried free women. If unmarried free man and woman happen to commit *zinā*, the punishment is one hundred lashes, which appears in Sūrah An-Nūr (24:2). As for the married man and woman committing *zinā* (adultery), the punishment is *rajm* which is death by stoning. Since this particular punishment cannot be reduced to half, all four Imāms agree on the position that the punishment of *zinā* committed by a bondman or bondwoman, married or unmarried, is fifty lashes. The injunction relating to the bondwomen has been mentioned in the present verse, but the question of the bondman too becomes clear from the obvious analogy of the text.

ذٰلِكَ لِمَنْ خَشِيَ الْعَنَتَ مِنْكُمْ : It means that the permission to marry a bondwoman is for a person who apprehends that he might fall into the sin of fornication.

وَأَنْ تَصْبِرُوا خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ (And that you be patient is better for you); that is, if a person, despite the apprehension of falling into *zinā*, exercises restraint and keeps himself morally pure rising above the pull of his sexual desire, then, this state of being is better than that one marries bondwomen.

وَاللّٰهُ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ (And Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful): It means that, no doubt, marrying bondwomen is *makrūh* (not desirable) yet, should one go on to do something in this line, Allah Almighty will still forgive him. Then, He is Very-Merciful too, because He allowed marriage with bondwomen and did not make it totally prohibited.

Special Note

Bondmen and bondwomen mentioned in the explanation of the present verse represent the *Shar'ī* bondmen and bondwomen. Men and women from among the disbelievers who were taken prisoners during *Jihād* were given to the Mujāhidīn as part of the distribution of spoils by the Amīr al-Mu'minīn, the Chief Executive of Muslims. These prisoners became the bondmen and bondwomen. Their offspring too remained in bondage (with the exception of some cases which appear in due details in books of *Fiqh*). Today Muslims have forsaken taking

up *Jihād* in the manner prescribed by the Sharī'ah of Islam, ignored the demands of their *Jihād,* have entrusted the options of peace and war in the hands of the enemies of their religion and have themselves become chained to principles and policies which have nothing to do with the Sharī'ah of Islam. Since that point of time Muslims departed from the pivot, they ended up being deprived of what was known as a bondman and bondwoman.

Common domestic servants in our own time are not 'bondmen' and 'bondwomen' because they are free.

In some parts of the world, children are sold out or enslaved. This is absolutely and totally *ḥarām* (forbidden). They do not become 'bondmen' and 'bondwomen' by doing that.

Verses 26 - 28

يُرِيدُ اللّٰهُ لِيُبَيِّنَ لَكُمْ وَيَهْدِيَكُمْ سُنَنَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ
وَيَتُوبَ عَلَيْكُمْ ط وَاللّٰهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿٢٦﴾ وَاللّٰهُ يُرِيدُ اَنْ يَّتُوبَ
عَلَيْكُمْ وَيُرِيدُ الَّذِينَ يَتَّبِعُونَ الشَّهَوٰتِ اَنْ تَمِيلُوا مَيْلًا
عَظِيمًا ﴿٢٧﴾ يُرِيدُ اللّٰهُ اَنْ يُّخَفِّفَ عَنْكُمْ وَخُلِقَ الْاِنْسَانُ
ضَعِيفًا ﴿٢٨﴾

Allah intends to make clear to you and to guide you to the ways of those before you and to relent towards you. And Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise. [26]

And Allah intends to relent towards you while those who follow the desires want you to deviate a great deviation. [27]

Allah intends to make things easy on you. And man has been created weak. [28]

Sequence

Mentioned in the previous verses were details of injunctions. Now, in the present verses, Allah Almighty points to his blessings and favours saying that your being obligated with these injunctions is for your own good, even though you may not be able to understand its manifestation in details. Then, along with it, there is the motivation to

follow the divine injunctions. Finally, there is the message of alert against the evil intentions of the misguided who wish ill of you and would like you to stray far away from the straight path.

Commentary

Following the description of several injunctions relating to marriage, the present verses say that Allah Almighty is making His injunctions very clear and explicit for you, and He is putting you in line with the ways of the noble prophets and the righteous who have come earlier. Do not think that these details of what is unlawful and what is not are there for you alone. The fact is that communities, earlier than you, were also charged with such injunctions. Those who acted in accordance with them were rewarded with Allah's favour.

As for those who follow the dictates of their desires, which includes fornicators, adulterers and nations and peoples adhering to false creeds who just do not recognize the restrictions of *ḥalāl* and *ḥarām* and make no distinction between lawful and unlawful would very much like you too to move away from the straight path and start giving ear to their false intentions and crooked ways. Be on your guard against them. There are creeds where it is all right to marry women - marriage with whom is not proper. Then there are many atheists who favour the very elimination of the institution of marriage as something out of tune with modern times. Not content with what they call "living together", there are people in some countries who are talking about women as a shared item of enjoyment. All this comes from people who take orders from their desiring self. Some Muslims, subscribing to Islam yet weak in their faith, when they keep company with disbelievers and atheists of such inclinations, fall a prey to their lustful claims and begin to think that their own religion is out-dated and that the position of the enemy is the very epitome of human progress. They do not realize that they have been framed into believing that people with such ideas are modern and forward-looking, something they start wishing their own religion could have permitted. Refuge with Allah from such spineless surrendering! The best policy is to take the warning given by Allah Almighty and stay away from owning and practicing ideas and ways of people with dispositions so wicked.

After this, in the first part of verse 28, it was said:

يُرِيْدُ اللّٰهُ اَنْ يُّخَفِّفَ عَنْكُمْ : It means that Allah, great in His majesty, intends to make things easy on you, that is, prescribes injunctions which can be carried out by everyone obligated with them. If one cannot afford marrying free women, permission has been given to marry bond-women. Parties to a marriage were given the right to settle the dower by mutual consent. Also given was the right to marry more than one woman under circumstantial necessity, of course, on condition that justice is not compromised.

At the end, in the second part of verse 28, the text says: وَخُلِقَ الْاِنْسَانُ ضَعِيْفًا (And man has been created weak). It means that man is weak by nature, and constituted desire-prone. If man was asked to stay away from women, totally and absolutely, he would have been a hopeless performer when it came to obeying the injunctions of Allah. It was, in view of his weakness and limitations, that he was not only permitted to marry women, but also that he was induced to do so. It goes without saying that the post-marriage life of a couple offers great benefits of mutual self-realization and most of all they enjoy the blessings of a sight that is untainted and a character that is unalloyed. This mutual purity of the couple increases the moral quality of life for both of them, making them strong, self-reliant and happy. So, marriage is a smart mutual contract to remove any chances of weakness that may afflict men and women - a peerless method indeed.

Verses 29 - 30

يٰاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تَاْكُلُوْٓا اَمْوَالَكُمْ بَيْنَكُمْ بِالْبَاطِلِ اِلَّآ اَنْ
تَكُوْنَ تِجَارَةً عَنْ تَرَاضٍ مِّنْكُمْ ۣ وَلَا تَقْتُلُوْٓا اَنْفُسَكُمْ ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ
كَانَ بِكُمْ رَحِيْمًا ﴿۲۹﴾ وَمَنْ يَّفْعَلْ ذٰلِكَ عُدْوَانًا وَّظُلْمًا فَسَوْفَ
نُصْلِيْهِ نَارًا ۭ وَكَانَ ذٰلِكَ عَلَى اللّٰهِ يَسِيْرًا ﴿۳۰﴾

O those who believe, do not eat up each other's property by false means unless it be a trade with your mutual consent. And do not kill yourselves. Indeed, Allah has been Very-Merciful to you. [29]

And whoever does that out of aggression and injustice,

We shall cast him into fire. And this is an easy thing for Allah. [30]

Sequence

Looking back from the beginning of Sūrah Al-Nisā', we see that it points out to the creation of all human beings from one father and mother and to the fact that all of them are bound in one big bond of brotherhood which suggests that rights of human beings at large have to be guarded and fulfilled. Then came a detailed statement about orphans and women which was followed by the injunctions of inheritance stressing upon the fulfillment of the rights of other relations in addition to those of the orphans and women. Pursuant to this came the injunctions of marriage telling about women who can be lawfully married and about those with whom marriage is unlawful, because marriage is a transaction and contract which entitles someone to enter into a woman's life and property.

The present verses bid the protection of human life and property and forbid any uncalled for intrusion into that area - whether those human beings are men or women, related or unrelated, Muslim or non-Muslim with whom there is a no-war pact in force. (Tafsīr al-Maẓharī)

Commentary

While prohibiting to eat up the property of others the actual words used in the verse are: اَمْوَالَكُمْ بَيْنَكُمْ which have been translated as 'each other's property' against the very literal, 'your property in between you'. There is a consensus of Commentators that these words certainly carry the sense that nobody should eat up the property of the other by false means. The sense of the expression also includes, as indicated by Abū Ḥayyān in Tafsīr al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ, that anybody should eat up his own property in that manner - for example, spend it on what is religiously sinful, or is straight extravagance. That too comes under the purview of this verse and is forbidden.

The word لَا تَاْكُلُوْا in the verse literally means, 'do not eat'. But, in common usage, it means, 'do not usurp the property of another person by false means whatever they may be by eating or drinking or using. In common parlance, the unauthorized use of what is owned by someone else is indicated by the idiom, 'eating up', even though it may not be eatable. The word, "*bāṭil*" which has been translated as "false

means" covers, in the view of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd and the majority of blessed Companions, all other forms which are impermissible and are forbidden by the Sharī'ah. Included thereunder are theft, robbery, usurpation, breach of trust, bribery, interest, gambling and all false transactions. (al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ)

False Means as explained by the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth

As for the Holy Qur'ān, it has used one word بالباطل (by false means) to declare that all wealth and property acquired by false means is unlawful. After that, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم was entrusted with the duty of providing details. It was he صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم who explained the details of every impermissible transaction.

From this we also find out that the many details of impermissible methods of buying and selling mentioned in the *aḥādīth* of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم are really an elaboration of this Qur'ānic injunction. Therefore, all those injunctions are, in a way, the very injunctions of the Qur'ān. Whatever injunctions of Sharī'ah have appeared in the *aḥādīth* of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم they all have a common feature - they all elucidate upon one or the other Qur'ānic injunction. It makes no difference whether we do or do not know that this is an explanation of a certain verse.

Permissible Methods

The first part of verse 29 explained above declares that devouring the other person's property by false and disapproved methods is unlawful. Then, in order to exempt permissible methods from the ruling of unlawfulness, it was said in the second part of the same verse: إِلَّآ أَن تَكُونَ تِجَارَةً عَن تَرَاضٍ مِّنكُمْ which means that the wealth and property of others which has been acquired through trade by mutual consent is not unlawful.

Although there are, besides trade, several other means and methods which are equally permissible - for example, borrowing, gift, charity, inheritance - but, generally the most recognized and commonly practiced form of one person's property passing into the possession and control of someone else is no other than trade. Then, trade is generally understood to be a buying and selling activity. But, according to al-Tafsīr al-Maẓharī, dealings related with service, labour and tenancy are also included in trade, because in *bai'* (sale) what is

acquired is *māl* (property) for *māl,* while in *ijāra* one gets *māl* for service and labour. Trade covers both.

The reason why trade alone, out of the permissible forms of acquiring wealth and property from others, has been singled out here in this verse is that trade and labour are the best means of earning livelihood out of a variety of those open to man. Sayyidnā Rāfi' ibn Khadīj رضی اللہ عنہ says that the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم when asked as to which mode of earning was the purest and the most lawful, said:

عمل الرجل بيده وكل بيع مبرور (مظهرى و ترغيب وترهيب)

"Man's work with his own hands, and all honest sale transactions (not false and fraudulent) (Al-Mundhiri, Al-Targhīb, and Maẓharī).

Sayyidnā Abū Sa'īd al-Khudhrī رضی اللہ عنہ narrates that the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said:

التاجر الصدوق الامين مع النبيين والصديقين والشهداء (ترمذى)

"The truthful and trustworthy trader shall be with the prophets and the truthful and the martyrs". (Tirmidhī)

And Sayyidnā Anas رضی اللہ عنہ narrates that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said:

التاجر الصدوق تحت ظل العرش يوم القيمة - رواه الاصبهانى (ترغيب)

"The truthful trader shall be under the shade of the Throne on the Day of Doom." (reported by al-Isfahānī, al-Targhīb)

Special Conditions of Clean Earning

According to a narration from Sayyidnā Mu'ādh ibn Jabal رضی اللہ عنہ the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said:

"The cleanest earning is the earning of the traders, on condition that, when they talk, they do not lie; and when they are asked to hold something in trust, they commit no breach of trust; and when they buy something from someone, they do not start finding faults in it; and when they sell their own stuff, they do not praise it (unrealistically); and when they have a debt to pay, they do not evade payment; and when they have a debt to recover from someone, they do not harass him." (Isfahānī, as quoted by Maẓharī)

For this reason, it was said in another *ḥadīth*:

ان التجار يبعثون يوم القيمة فجارا الامن اتقى وبر وصدق (اخرجه الحاكم عن رفاعة بن رافع)

"Traders will be raised on the Day of Doom as the sinners except him who fears Allah, acts righteously and says what is true." (al-Ḥākim, from Rifā'ah b. Rāfi')

Trade and Mutual Consent :

The words "unless it be a trade with your mutual consent "in verse 29 lay down two conditions for the validity of a transaction through which the property of another person may lawfully be acquired. Firstly, it must be a transaction of trade which requires exchange of properties. Therefore, the transactions of gambling, speculation and usury or the transactions of sale where the commodity does not exist are forbidden and are not valid in Sharī'ah, because these transactions cannot be termed as trade, even though they are effected in the name of trade.

Secondly, the transaction must be effected with the mutual consent of the parties. Therefore, if there is trade, where the object of sale does exist, but the mutual consent of the parties is not there, even then, the sale is invalid and impermissible. Thus, these two forms are included under "eating up each other's property by false means". Muslim jurists call the first form, *albai' al-bāṭil'*, while the second form is given the name, '*al-bai' al-fāsid*'.

To explain the first condition, we can say that trade is the name of the exchange of one commodity with the other. Having commodity on one side and having no commodity against it is not trade. It is deception. The same holds good for interest-based transactions where the amount of interest is a return for the time allowed in a loan - and this 'time' is no 'commodity'. The same thing happens in speculation and gambling. Here, the commodity does exist on one side, but the existence of a commodity against it is doubtful. Similarly, there are transactions based on forward trading where the commodity does not exist but a deal is made for its sale / purchase. Here you have commodity on one side and nothing but a promise on the other. Therefore, this is just

not trade. If fact, this is deception and a kind of fraud. Therefore, Muslim jurists have ruled it to be *al-bai' al-bāṭil*, a void transaction of sale. The explanation as given here eliminates all impermissible forms of trading.

As for the second condition, it covers a situation where a property is being exchanged for another property. Both do exist, but the transaction of exchange did not take place with mutual consent. Although this is a trade, yet it is a wrong and invalid type of trade. Therefore, it has been called '*fāsid*' (invalid) and is not allowed.

The reality of the condition of mutual consent

However, there is a third kind in which there is commodity on both sides, and apparently the transaction has been effected with mutual consent, but the consent of one party has been obtained by compulsion and not by his free will. Therefore, this third kind is also included in the second one. For example, a person or company collects articles of daily use from all over the market, builds up a stock, raises prices on the higher side and starts selling. Since this is not available elsewhere in the market, the customer has no choice but to buy it from him at whatever price he may be selling it. In this situation, though the customer himself walks into the store and, obviously, buys it with his consent, but this 'consent' is an outcome of compulsion and therefore, it is null and void.

Similarly, if a husband makes the conditions of living with his wife so thorny that she is compelled to forgo her due dower, then, this expression of 'consent' made by her while abandoning her right to receive the dower, is not considered as consent in the real sense of the term.

Or, take the example of a person who discovers that he is not going to get his valid job done without offering a bribe, and he becomes ready to offer a bribe, then, this willingness and consent is not of his own free will. Therefore, it is legally null and void.

Thus, it becomes very clear that the restriction in إِلَّا أَنْ تَكُونَ تِجَارَةً عَنْ تَرَاضٍ مِّنْكُمْ (unless it be trade with your mutual consent) justifies only those forms of buying, selling and trading the justification of which stands proved on the authority of the *aḥādīth* of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Muslim

jurists have simply codified them. So, all forms of buying, selling and trading prohibited and impermissible in the Sharī'ah of Islām stand excluded from the approved core. To sum up, this one word of the Holy Qur'ān provides the key to the wonderful treasure of Muslim jurisprudence on the subject of *al-buyū'* and *al-ijāra*.

The third sentence of the first verse (29) says: وَلَا تَقْتُلُوٓا اَنْفُسَكُمْ which has been literally translated here as 'and do not kill yourselves.' According to the consensus of commentators, this includes suicide; as well as, killing each other unjustly. The first sentence of the verse described the property rights of human beings at large and stressed that they be guarded. The present sentence, the third one we have before us right now, covers their right of life. Property has been mentioned in this verse earlier than 'life', probably because injustice and negligence are very common in matters relating to property rights. No doubt, unjust killing is far more grave, yet customarily its frequency is lower. Hence, it comes later.

Verse 29 closes with the statement: اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ بِكُمْ رَحِيْمًا which means that the injunctions given in this verse -- 'do not eat up each other's property by false means' or 'do not kill anyone unjustly' -- are injunctions that come to you as Divine Mercy, so that you can take your guard against falling into these misdeeds and thereby become liable to punishment in the life to come, and also that you may stay safe from punishments which could afflict you right here in the present life.

After that, the next verse (30) says: وَمَنْ يَّفْعَلْ ذٰلِكَ عُدْوَانًا وَّظُلْمًا فَسَوْفَ نُصْلِيْهِ نَارًا . It means: If, despite the instructions of the Holy Qur'ān, anyone acts otherwise, and knowingly, aggressively and unjustly, takes what belongs to someone else, or kills anyone unjustly, Allah will cast him into Fire. Here, the restriction of 'aggression' and 'injustice' shows that, should this happen out of forgetfulness or mistake, it is not included in this warning.

Verse 31

اِنْ تَجْتَنِبُوْا كَبَآئِرَ مَا تُنْهَوْنَ عَنْهُ نُكَفِّرْ عَنْكُمْ سَيِّاٰتِكُمْ
وَنُدْخِلْكُمْ مُّدْخَلًا كَرِيْمًا ﴿۳۱﴾

If you abstain from the major (sins) out of what you

have been forbidden from, We shall write off your minor sins and shall admit you to a noble entrance. [31]

Righteous Deeds : *Kaffārah* of Minor Sins

Kaffārah is what makes amends, an expiation. So the meaning is that righteous deeds will be taken as *Kaffārah* for minor sins which will thus be written off, resulting in reward instead of punishment and Paradise instead of Hell. This is in accordance with authentic *aḥādīth* where it has been stated that when a person makes *wuḍū* for *ṣalāh*, the act of washing each part of his body becomes the *Kaffārah* for sins; the washing of the face becomes the *Kaffārah* for sins committed by the eye, the ear, the nose; gargling becomes the *Kaffārah* for the sins of the tongue; washing feet a washes way the sins of the feet - and when he walks towards the *masjid,* every step he takes brings with it the *Kaffārah* of sins.

Major Sins are forgiven by *Taubah* alone

From the verse, we find that the expiation of sins through righteous deeds such as *wuḍū, ṣalāh* and the rest, which appear in *aḥādīth*, concerns minor sins. As for major sins, they are not forgiven without *Taubah* (Repentance); and for minor sins, the condition is that one should have made the effort to stay away and remain safe from major sins. This leaves us with a note of warning - if someone, while staying involved in major sins, goes on performing his *wuḍū'* and *ṣalāh*, then this *wuḍū'* and *ṣalāh* and other righteous deeds will not at all expiate for even his minor sins, let alone the major ones. It is a warning that when a person appears on the fateful Day of Resurrection, carrying the heavy burden of his major and minor sins, he will find no helping hand to make his burden any lighter.

It will be recalled that some major sins were mentioned in the previous verses alongwith the warning of severe punishment for those who commit them. It is a peculiar style of the Holy Qur'ān that when it warns of punishment against a sin, it is generally followed by some aspect of persuasion towards obedience.

In the present verse too, a particular Divine reward has been mentioned and people have been persuaded to acquire it by staying away from major sins, in which case, Allah Almighty will forgive their minor sins on His own. Thus, cleansed of all sins, major and minor,

one could look forward to entering the home of honour and peace, the garden of Paradise.

The two kinds of sins

This verse tells us that there are two kinds of sins. Some of them are *kabīrah*, that is, major sins; others are *saghīrah*, (termed as *Saiyyāt*, in this verse) that is, minor sins. He who musters enough courage and succeeds in staying away from major sins, has been given a promise by Allah Almighty that He will forgive his minor sins on His own.

Now, the act of staying away from major sins also includes the act of fulfilling all obligations (*farḍ* and *wājib*) because neglecting or abandoning obligations is a major sin in itself. Thus, we come to the conclusion that if one dutifully fulfills all obligations and succeeds in saving himself from all major sins, Allah Almighty will overlook his minor sins.

Defining Major and Minor Sins

The word, "*Kabā'ir*" used in the verse is the plural of '*kabīrah*' meaning 'major sins.' Before we proceed further, we should understand the nature and identification of 'major sins'. Also, we should know the definition of minor sins, and their number. Being an important subject, scholars of the Muslim community have devoted regular books to throw light on this subject from various angles.

Let us, first of all, realize that sin, in the absolute sense, is the name of an act which is against the command and the will of Allah Almighty. Starting from this particular point, you will be able to see that the sin known as '*saghīrah*' or, technically, a minor sin, is, in fact, no minor sin for that matter. To disobey Allah Almighty and to oppose His will is, invariably, a grave crime. Therefore, based on this view, a large number of scholars of the Muslim community have ruled that every disobedience of Allah and every opposition to His will is nothing but '*kabīrah*' or major sin. The distinction between '*kabīrah*' and '*saghīrah*', major and minor sins, is made only when these are compared to each other. It is in this sense that the blessed Companion, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Abbās has been reported to have said: كل مانهى عنه نهو كبيرة which means that 'Any act forbidden by the Sharī'ah is a major sin.'

In short, a sin which is technically known as minor does not mean that people should go about indulging in it neglectfully, indolently or just ignore it as something ordinary. On the contrary, the fact is that a minor sin, if done with nerve or heedlessness, does not remain minor anymore - it becomes a major sin. A good example of a major and a minor sin, as given by some sage, is that of a small scorpion and a big scorpion, or that of a large ember and a tiny spark, for man cannot bear the pain given by any of these. Therefore, Muḥammad ibn Ka'b al-Qurazī said that the greatest act of worship offered for Allah is to give up sins. The *'ibādah* or worship by people, who offer prayers and remember Allah, yet do not give up sins, is not accepted. The famous mystic, Fuḍayl ibn 'Ayāḍ said: 'The lighter you take a sin to be, the greater it will become with Allah as a crime.' The most righteous elders of the Muslim community used to say: Every sin is a courier of *kufr* which invites people to manners and morals typical of disbelievers.

According to the Musnad of Aḥmad, Sayyidnā 'Ā'ishah رضی اللہ عنہا wrote a letter to Sayyidnā Mu'āwiyah رضی اللہ عنہ in which she said that a servant of Allah who disobeys Allah Almighty finds his fans become fault-finders, and friends turn into enemies. Heedlessness towards sins is the cause of man's permanent ruination. It appears in an authentic *ḥadīth* that the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said: When a true believer falls in sin, a black dot appears on his heart. If, after that, he repents and seeks forgiveness from Allah, this dot disappears. If he does not repent, this dot keeps on increasing, so much so that it covers his whole heart. In the Qur'ān, the name given to this dot is '*rayn*', as in كَلَّا بَلْ رَانَ عَلٰى قُلُوْبِهِمْ مَّا كَانُوْا يَكْسِبُوْنَ that is, their evil deeds have rusted their hearts - 83:14.

However, it is necessary that there be a method to distinguish between sins in terms of corruption they cause, evil results they bring and harmful outcome they produce. Thus, it is because of this need to differentiate that a certain sin is called 'major' and a certain other 'minor'.

Major Sins

The definition of '*kabā'ir*', as indicated in the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth and as explained by the most revered elders, is that a sin on which a

Ḥadd or punishment has been prescribed in the Qur'ān or Sunnah to be enforced in this present life or on which words of curse or *la'nah* have appeared, or on which stern warning of Hell has been mentioned, are all major sins. Similarly, every sin the evil outcome of which is equal to or more than a major sin shall be counted as a major sin. Also, a sin done with a rebellious attitude or done as a permanent habit is also included in the major sins.

Someone said before Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه that the number of major sins was seven. He said: 'Not seven. Say seven hundred, which is better.' In his book Al-Zawājir, Imām Ibn Ḥajr al-Makkī has given a list of all such sins with their full explanations, sins which are included under *kabā'ir* in accordance with the definition given above. The number of major sins listed in his book reaches upto four hundred and sixty seven. The truth of the matter is that some scholars have considered it sufficient to count prominent major sins only and thus the number they have come up with is lower. Others who went in details and dealt with all divisions and sub-divisions of the subject came up with a higher number. Therefore, this is not much of a contradiction. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has himself pointed to many sins as being major. Then, as appropriate under given circumstances, he has also named them in threes and sixes and sevens or even more elsewhere. From this, the scholars of the Muslim community came to the conclusion that the purpose is not to determine any particular number as a universal statement. Rather, each number mentioned in a *ḥadīth* relates to particular occasions or circumstances where that particular number was deemed appropriate in the given situation.

In a *ḥadīth* of al-Bukhārī and Muslim, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been reported to have said: I warn you against the top ones from among the major sins. They are three in number - to associate a created being as a partner in the divinity of Allah, to disobey parents and to give false witness or to lie. In yet another narration of al-Bukhārī and Muslim, it has been reported that someone asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ as to what could be the greatest of all sins. He said: 'That you ascribe partners to Allah although He has created you.' He was then asked as to the greatest of all sins after that. He said: 'That you kill your child for fear of his sharing in your sustenance and that

you will have to feed him.' He was again asked as to the greatest of all sins after that. He said: 'Committing adultery with the wife of your neighbour.' Since the protection of the family of a neighbour is the responsibility of all human beings very much like the protection of one's own family, therefore, the gravity of this crime becomes twofold.

According to yet another *ḥadīth* reported by al-Bukhārī and Muslim, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: 'That someone uses abusive language for his parents is also one of the major sins.' Surprised, the noble Companions asked: 'O Messenger of Allah, how is it possible that someone starts using abusive language against his very own parents?' He said: 'Yes. A person abuses the parents of another person as a result of which the later abuses the parents of the former. This too is as if he had abused his own parents, because he was the one who became the cause of those abuses.'

As in a narration of Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has counted - *shirk* (ascribing partners to Allah), unjust killing, eating up of the property of an orphan by false means, devouring income from interest, deserting the battlefield of *jihād*, false accusation against chaste women, disobedience to parents and the desecration of the Holy Ka'ba - among major sins. In some *ḥadīth* narrations, the eventuality - that a person winds up living in a country of disbelievers (*dār al-kufr*) and emigrates to a country of believers (*dār al-Islām*), but later, leaves the country to which he has migrated and goes back to live into the country of disbelievers - has also been ruled as a major sin.

There are other narrations of *aḥādīth* where some of the forms of behaviour cited below have been included in the list of major sins, such as, taking a false oath, holding back water in excess of one's need and refusing to share it with those who need it, to learn magic, and to practice magic. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said, 'Drinking is the greatest of major sins'; he also said: 'Drinking is the mother of all shameful deeds,' because once drunk, man can fall into any conceivable evil. There is another *ḥadīth* where he said: 'The gravest major sin is that one imputes to his Muslim brother a fault which stains his character.' According to one *ḥadīth,* one who brackets two *ṣalāhs* (time-bound prescribed prayers) at one time without an excuse approved by the Sharī'ah has committed a major sin. It means that he did not

perform a *ṣalāh* at the time it was due, but performed it as *qaḍā* (missed) prayer along with another *ṣalāh*. Some *ḥadīth* narrations declare that losing hope in the mercy of Allah Almighty is also a major sin; and so it will be in the event if one becomes careless or daring enough to forget all about His punishment and retribution. Another narration rules that making a will to bring loss to an inheritor or to reduce his share in the inheritance is also one of the major sins.

And it appears in a narration from the Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم once spoke the words: 'Destitutes, losers, they are ruined.' He repeated this three times. Sayyidnā Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī رضى الله عنه asked: 'O Messenger of Allah, who are these unfortunate people?' He replied: 'One: a person who lets his trouser or wrap or shirt or robe hang all the way down below his ankles; two: one who spends something in the way of Allah, then publicizes his favour; three: one who, inspite of his old age, indulges in shameful deeds; four: one who, despite holding a position of authority, tells lies; five: one who, despite having a family, waxes proud; six: one who gives his hand of allegiance in the hands of a worthy Imām or master just for the sake of material gains.

Concluding in the same vein, we refer to another *ḥadīth* from al-Bukhārī and Muslim which proclaims that the back-biter will not be admitted into the Paradise. And a *ḥadīth* in Nasā'ī and the Musnad of Aḥmad enlarges on the theme by saying that some kinds of people will not be admitted into the Paradise, that is, the drinker, the disobeyer of parents, the unjustified severer of relations with kinsmen, the publicizer of a favour, the diviner of the unseen through jinns, satans and other mediums and the *dayyūth* (ديوث), a wittol or cuckold who is so contented with his shamelessness that he never stops his wife and family members from going the way of immodesty. And a *ḥadīth* from the Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim says that *la'nah* or the curse of Allah is for one who sacrifices an animal for anyone other than Allah.

Verses 32 - 33

وَلَا تَتَمَنَّوْا مَا فَضَّلَ اللّٰهُ بِهٖ بَعْضَكُمْ عَلٰى بَعْضٍ ؕ لِلرِّجَالِ
نَصِيْبٌ مِّمَّا اكْتَسَبُوْا ؕ وَلِلنِّسَآءِ نَصِيْبٌ مِّمَّا اكْتَسَبْنَ ؕ وَاسْئَلُوا

اللّٰهَ مِنْ فَضْلِهٖ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيْمًا ﴿۳۲﴾ وَلِكُلٍّ
جَعَلْنَا مَوَالِيَ مِمَّا تَرَكَ الْوَالِدٰنِ وَالْاَقْرَبُوْنَ ؕ وَالَّذِيْنَ عَقَدَتْ
اَيْمَانُكُمْ فَاٰتُوْهُمْ نَصِيْبَهُمْ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ
شَهِيْدًا ﴿۳۳﴾

And do not covet something by which Allah has made some of you excel some others. For men there is a share of what they earned and for women, a share of what they earned. And pray to Allah for His grace. Surely, Allah is All-Knowing in respect of everything. [32]

And for everyone We have made heirs in what the parents and the nearest of kin have left. And as for those with whom you have made a pledge, give them their shares. Surely, Allah is a Witness over everything. [33]

In the injunctions of inheritance appearing previously, it was mentioned that, given the conditions, for a male there is a share equal to that of two females. There are other proved aspects of male precedence as well. So, Sayyidah Umm Salmah رضی اللہ عنہا once said to the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم : 'Our share in the inheritance is half. Then, there are such and such elements of difference between us and men...'

Her purpose was not to raise an objection. Rather, she wished to be a man and to deserve the merits restricted for men. There were other women who wished: 'Had we been men, we would have taken part in *Jihād* and the merit of *Jihād* would have been ours.'

A woman asked the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم : 'A man gets a double share in the inheritance and the witness of a woman is half as compared with a man - does that mean that we shall be getting a half reward for all of our acts of worship?' Thereupon, the present verse was revealed in which an answer to both these statements has been given. The answer to Sayyidah Umm Salmah was given by 'and do not covet...' and the answer to the last-mentioned woman was given by 'for men there is a share...'

Commentary

Coveting the Unacquirable

In this verse (32), coveting things, traits and merits given to others has been prohibited, for they are not acquirable by effort. The reason is that when a man finds himself lacking in wealth, comfort, beauty, merit, knowledge and similar other states of being, he naturally experiences a surge of envy which urges him to come, at least, at par with that person, or, if possible, be ahead. But, he does not always have the capability or power to make his wish come true because there are merits and excellences which have nothing to do with man's own efforts and acquisitions. They are simply the blessings of nature, for example, being a man or being the scion of a prophet's family or having been born in the family of a ruler or having been born beautiful. So, one who does not have access to these blessings can never obtain them by effort even if he were to spend a whole life-time devoted to that pursuit. A woman cannot become a man, nor can one choose to be born in the family of a prophet, or change his physique - become tall and handsome, acquire all beautiful features of his choice - because, this is not within his power. He simply cannot acquire these in the real sense, no matter how much he struggles with his medicines, treatments and devices. Consequently, when he finds himself incapable of matching the other person, his inner self starts playing with the idea that it would be wonderful if such blessings were snatched away from him (the other person) as well, so that, he too becomes either equal or lower than him. This is envy, a terribly, shameful and damaging trait of human morals, which is the cause of so many disputes, disturbances, killings and ravages in this world.

This verse of the Holy Qur'ān closes the doors of disorders by saying: وَلَا تَتَمَنَّوْا مَا فَضَّلَ اللّٰهُ بِهٖ بَعْضَكُمْ عَلٰى بَعْضٍ. It means that Allah Almighty, in His infinite wisdom, has blessed people with all sorts of merits and excellences. He gave someone a particular quality, then gave someone else yet another quality; less to some, more to some others. In this matter, everyone should rest pleased with his or her destiny and stay clear from the envious desire to become the possessor of the other person's merits and excellences, for the end-result of this game of desires is nothing but a biting sense of personal loss, and of course,

that awful sin of envy.

It may sound a little simple, but the truth of the matter is that anyone Allah Almighty elects to be a man should be grateful for it, and anyone He elects to be a woman should be pleased with being just that, realizing that, had she been a man, may be, she could have failed to fulfil the responsibilities placed on a man, and would have thus ended up being a sinner. Then, anyone created beautiful by Allah Almighty should be all the more grateful for having been so blessed; and, anyone lesser in looks should also not grieve thinking of the good that may lie hidden behind this destiny, for being blessed with beauty does not necessarily guarantee good. It might have the recipient land into some unwelcome state of trial or corruption. Again, anyone who is a true lineal descendant of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم should thank Allah Almighty for the great blessing of this lineal connection; and, anyone who does not have this connection should neither worry about it, nor should he go about longing for it, because this is something which cannot be acquired by effort, and if one still insists on coveting it, what he would get involved with will be nothing but sin and the gain he would make would be nothing but a broken heart and an aching soul. So, rather than pine for a lineage one does not have, the best policy is to think about one's own doings. Let these be good and righteous. Once a person enhances himself with such spiritual strengths, he can be ahead of those with higher or better lineage.

Striving to excel others in good deeds is different

There are verses of the Holy Qur'ān and the sayings of the noble Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم which exhort people to excel each other in good deeds. In other words, this is an open field in which it is all right to look at the trail of merits and excellence left by others. Indeed, people have been persuaded to make all possible efforts to acquire them. Now, this relates to deeds within man's control, and which can be acquired by learning, training and working. For example, if a person is impressed with someone's intellectual merits, practical life and excellent morals, he can, by all means, strive to acquire these qualities. This is very desirable, and praiseworthy. As such, the present verse does not contradict it. In fact, the later part of the same verse (32), that is, لِلرِّجَالِ نَصِيبٌ مِّمَّا اكْتَسَبُوا وَلِلنِّسَاءِ نَصِيبٌ مِّمَّا اكْتَسَبْنَ is actually supporting this view. It

means that men will get a share of what they acquired with their effort and conduct, and the same will be true for women who will get a share of what they acquired with their effort and conduct. One is not likely to miss the hint here - that effort and struggle in the acquisition of merits and perfections do not go waste. On the contrary, every man and woman will definitely get a return, a share of his or her effort. From here, we also know that desiring to have someone's intellectual-moral excellence as combined with his model practical conduct, and then going ahead to see the fruition of these desires through effort and struggle, is certainly desirable and praiseworthy. Removed in the process here is an error which is committed by a lot of people who tend to do things not knowing what they are doing. Some of them become so devoted to their desire to acquire merits which cannot be acquired that they ruin their otherwise peaceful life right here in this mortal world. And if, bad come to worse, they are fired with envy, that is, they start wishing - 'if I do not have this blessing, may this be taken away from the other' - then, the very chances of salvation in the life to come also stand destroyed because of the grave sin of envy committed by him.

Moreover, there are another kind of people as well who lack courage, avoid action, or just have no sense of honour and shame, who do not even try to acquire merits which can be acquired. Such people, when approached with good counsel, would come back immediately, blaming their destiny and fate which is no more than an effort to camouflage their own timidity and inertia. The present verse has resolved this problem by stating a wise and just rule which is: Man's effort is ineffective in acquiring merits which he does not control, such as, being high-born or handsome. Merits like these should be resigned to fate and one must be content with the divinely determined state he is in, and be grateful to Allah Almighty. Coveting anymore than that is absurd, ineffectual, meddlesome - an act which leaves behind nothing but a handful of sorrows.

As for merits which can be acquired by effort, wishing to have them is useful, only if such a wish is supported by the necessary struggle to achieve. Let us keep in mind that the verse carries the promise that the effort so made will not be wasted and everyone will get a share of what he or she worked for.

Referring back to injunctions prohibiting the unjust use of someone's property and the unjust taking of someone's life (29), Tafsīr al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ points out that this verse aims to seal the very source of these crimes, and it is for this purpose that instructions have been given to stop people from coveting others who are ahead of them in wealth, comfort or influence. A little thought will reveal that theft, robbery and other illegitimate ways of usurping someone's property, or to kill and destroy, are crimes which sprout from one particular emotional attitude. A person, when he finds the other ahead of him in wealth and other material acquisitions, first feels the pinch in his heart wishing to come at par with him, or even wishes to become superior to him. Then, it is the intensity of this desire which pushes him all the way to go ahead and commit these crimes. The Holy Qur'ān, as said earlier, has blocked the source of these crime by blocking the very desire of the unacquirables and the unobtainables of life.

To ask for Allah's grace is the ideal way

After that, the verse moves on to instruct by saying: وَاسْئَلُوا اللهَ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ (And pray to Allah for His grace). It means, 'when you see someone excel in one or the other graces of life,' the ideal conduct is, 'not to wish to come at par with the other person in respect of that particular excellence, but that you should pray to Allah asking for graces and blessings from Him.' The reason is that Allah's grace appears in different forms for everyone. For some, wealth is a blessing from God for, if they were to become paupers, they might have fallen victims to sin and disbelief. For some others, grace lies in the very pecuniary circumstances they are in, for if they were to turn rich, they might have succumbed to thousands of sins. Similarly, for some, grace appears in the form of power and influence, while for some others, the unremembered and the unattended, the grace of Allah manifests itself in that very state. A look at the reality of things around would have told him that power and influence, if these were to be his lot, might have caused his falling into many a sin. Therefore, the verse instructs - when you ask Allah, do not ask for some fixed quality of life, instead, ask for His grace so that He, in his His infinite wisdom, opens the doors of His blessings on you.

Trust His Wisdom and Knowledge

The verse concludes by saying: إِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ بِكُلِّ شَىْءٍ عَلِيمًا (Surely, Allah is All-Knowing in respect of everything.) Here, the hint is that the arrangement of things made by Allah Almighty is the very quintessence of wisdom and justice. Whoever has been created and sustained in whatever condition it may be is an arrangement perfectly matched with the ideal demand of wisdom and justice. But, man is not fully aware of the consequences of what he does. This is something only Allah knows best and thus He also knows how suitable it is to keep anyone in a given condition.

The law of inheritance: Reiteration of the wisdom in it

While describing the background in which the present verse was revealed, which appears in the introductory remarks preceding the Commentary, it was stated that some women, when they found out that men have been given a share equal to that of two women, wished they were men so that they too would be getting a doubled share. In a relevant manner, the law of inheritance was reiterated in the second verse (33) and it was tersely said that all shares determined therein are based on perfect wisdom and justice. Since human reason cannot encompass the totality of factors that contribute to the order or disorder of the created universe, it is obvious that it cannot arrive precisely at those elements of wisdom which have been taken into consideration in determining the laws of Allah Almighty. Therefore, whosoever has been allotted whatsoever share should be pleased with it, and be grateful for it.

Inheriting through pledge

The giving of a share on the basis of a pledge mentioned at the end of verse 33 refers to a practice during the initial period of Islam. This was later abrogated by the verse أُولُوا الْأَرْحَامِ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلَىٰ بِبَعْضٍ (As for the womb - relatives, some of them are closer to some...) (33:6) Now, if other heirs exist, a pledge or mutual contract between two parties does not affect the inheritance in any manner whatsoever.

Verses 34 - 35

اَلرِّجَالُ قَوّٰمُوْنَ عَلَى النِّسَآءِ بِمَا فَضَّلَ اللّٰهُ بَعْضَهُمْ عَلٰى

بَعْضٍ وَّبِمَآ اَنْفَقُوْا مِنْ اَمْوَالِهِمْ ۗ فَالصّٰلِحٰتُ قٰنِتٰتٌ حٰفِظٰتٌ
لِّلْغَيْبِ بِمَا حَفِظَ اللّٰهُ ۗ وَالّٰتِيْ تَخَافُوْنَ نُشُوْزَهُنَّ فَعِظُوْهُنَّ
وَاهْجُرُوْهُنَّ فِي الْمَضَاجِعِ وَاضْرِبُوْهُنَّ ۚ فَاِنْ اَطَعْنَكُمْ فَلَا تَبْغُوْا
عَلَيْهِنَّ سَبِيْلًا ۗ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ عَلِيًّا كَبِيْرًا ﴿٣٤﴾ وَاِنْ خِفْتُمْ شِقَاقَ
بَيْنِهِمَا فَابْعَثُوْا حَكَمًا مِّنْ اَهْلِهٖ وَحَكَمًا مِّنْ اَهْلِهَا ۚ اِنْ يُّرِيْدَآ
اِصْلَاحًا يُّوَفِّقِ اللّٰهُ بَيْنَهُمَا ۗ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ عَلِيْمًا خَبِيْرًا ﴿٣٥﴾

Men stand caretakers of women since Allah has made some of them excel the others, and because they have spent of their wealth. So, the righteous women are obedient, guarding in absence with the protection given by Allah. As for women whose disobedience you fear, convince them, and leave them apart in beds, and beat them. Then, if they obey you, do not seek a way against them. Surely, Allah is the Highest, the Greatest.[34]

And if you fear a split between them, send one arbitrator from his people and one from her people. If they desire to set things right, Allah shall bring about harmony between them. Surely, Allah is All-Knowing, All-Aware. [35]

Under injunctions concerning women, appearing earlier, discrimination against them by withholding or wasting their rights was prohibited. Now, the present verses describe the rights of men.

Commentary

Verse 34 opens with an important statement: اَلرِّجَالُ قَوّٰمُوْنَ عَلَى النِّسَآءِ which has been translated as 'men stand caretakers of women.' *Qawwām, qayyām or qayyim* in Arabic denotes a person who holds the responsibility or has the duty and charge to manage a job or run a system or take care of what has to be done about something, controlling all related factors therein. The standard role of a man, with regard to women, has been mentioned in this verse through the word, '*qawwām*' which has been translated in various ways, the most common being in the sense of '*ḥākim*' or one who rules, governs, or decides. Other alternates used are guardians, custodians, overseers and protectors. When

taken in the sense of a carer, a functional head, and not in the political sense of a ruler or dictator, the '*qawwām*' or *ḥākim* of the Qur'ān offers a base of understanding from common experience. It is obvious that, for any group-living, big or small, or for any organized system, it is rationally and customarily necessary that the group or system have some head or chief or authority so that he can arbitrate in the event of a difference and take decisions to run affairs smoothly. That such authority is needed in the running of countries, governments and states is universally accepted and practiced. This need, as felt in modern times, was also felt in the older tribal social organizations where the chief of a tribe was taken as the authority for that tribe. Why would a family organization, a micro-sample of the larger organizations, would not need someone to head, maintain and run the system? Of course, the need is there and Allah Almighty, in His infinite wisdom, elected men for this responsibility because their natural capabilities are more pronounced than those of women and children.

This is such an open and obvious fact of human life that no sane human being, man or woman, can say no to it; and its denial does not change reality.

The gist of the matter is that, as seen from وَلِلرِّجَالِ عَلَيْهِنَّ دَرَجَةٌ (and for men, there is a step above them) and from اَلرِّجَالُ قَوّٰمُوْنَ عَلَى النِّسَاءِ (men stand caretakers of women), the message is that the rights of women are as incumbent upon men as the rights of men are upon women, and the rights of both are similar to each other, with only one exception that men have a certain precedence in functional authority, although this too is hemmed with other balancing factors. As explained in other verses of the Holy Qur'ān, this mantle of authority placed on the shoulders of men is not that of a dictator and a tyrant. While exercizing this authority, man is bound by the supreme law of Islam, the Sharī'ah. He must act on the principle of consultation and follow good counsel. He just cannot act at the spur of his whim or his wild instincts. The command given to him is: وَعَاشِرُوْهُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ It mean: Treat women well, as recognized.

This aspect of having mutual consultation appears in another verse (2:233) where it was said: عَنْ تَرَاضٍ مِّنْهُمَا وَتَشَاوُرٍ. Here men have been instructed to act in consultation with wives in family affairs. After this

clarification, the technical authority of man should not be a source of heart-burning for women. Still, in view of the probability that women may take this arrangement unhappily, Allah Almighty did not restrict the text on proclaiming the authority of man, but explained two reasons for this authority. One reason relates to the wisdom of creation which is beyond the control of any human being, and the other refers to a factor which comes through one's efforts and endeavour.

The first reason has been mentioned in the words: بِمَا فَضَّلَ اللّٰهُ بَعْضَهُمْ عَلٰى بَعْضٍ It means that Allah Almighty has made some excel the others (in some qualities) under His exclusive wisdom and consideration. This is like the sacred environs of Makkah where a particular House of Worship was declared by Allah as His House and Qiblah (the orientation), and in Jerusalem, a special honour was given to the Bayt al-Maqdis. Similar is the case with the precedence of men. This is a God-given grace. Men have done nothing to get it and there is nothing wrong with women that they do not have it. It is simply based on the wisdom of creation, an exclusive privilege of the Creator.

The second reason relates to what is achieved with effort. This reason is pointed out by the words وَبِمَآ اَنْفَقُوْا مِنْ اَمْوَالِهِمْ which mean that men spend their money, pay dower and take the responsibility of meeting all needs of women. Hence, the precedence.

At this point, a comment from Ibn Ḥibbān in al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ, is worth attention. He says, 'These two reasons in support of the authority of men also prove that the right to authority does not get to be established simply by force. Rather, this right can be deserved on the basis of one's competence and capability.

The Qur'ānic eloquence in describing the precedence of men

It is noteworthy that the Holy Qur'ān, while giving the first reason for the precedence of men, has not opted for an expression like - فَضَّلَهُمْ عَلَيْهِنَّ : 'because He made men excel women', On the contrary, it has elected to give a deeper significance to the statement by using the expression: بَعْضَهُمْ عَلٰى بَعْضٍ , that is, 'made some of them excel the others'. The wisdom here is not difficult to see. The Arabic expression بَعْضَهُمْ عَلٰى بَعْضٍ has a subtle indictation to the fact that men and women are part of each other. Therefore, there is a hint that the precedence of men, even if proved in one or the other field, will not go beyond being similar to

the precedence of man's head over his hand, or of his heart over his stomach. So, just as the precedence of man's head over his hand does not diminish the role and the importance of the hand, similarly, the precedence of man does not cause any lowering of the status of women, because both of them are parts of each other's body - if man is the head, woman is the body.

Some commentators identify yet another hint here. According to them, this precedence men have over women is in terms of genus. As far as individuals are concerned, it is quite possible that a woman may excel a man in her qualities and practical accomplishments, so much so that a woman may be superior to some individual men even in the qualities of a care-taker.

The role of men and women: The principle of function

The second reason given for the precedence of men, is that they spend their earnings to take care of women. Here too, there are some points to ponder. To begin with, it removes the possible doubt that may creep up due to the share of men being twice that of women as described in the verses of inheritance. This is done by the present verse when it declares that all financial responsibilities rest with men. As for women, all her financial responsibilities before her marriage rest with her father and after marriage, these pass on to the husband. With this in view, giving a twofold share to a man is not really too much, for it zooms back to women after all.

Now let us pursue the second hint about an important principle in life. The principle is that woman, in terms of her creation and nature, should not be subjected to go out, work and earn her own livelihood. Also, the very attributes of her being are hardly conducive to her running around offices and markets, doing jobs and laborious work to earn a livelihood. So, to keep her safe from roughing it out like men, Allah Almighty has placed her total responsibility on men. Before she is married, her father takes care of her, and after her marriage, she becomes the responsibility of her husband. Woman, as opposed to her sweating it out in the work places in the name of income, career or liberation, has been made the means of human procreation. Then, the responsibility of being mothers of children and that of managing and holding the house and the family together has also been placed on her

shoulders. Man cannot handle the burdens of responsibilities in these areas.

Keeping this in view, it is not possible to deduce that the status of women has been reduced by making them dependent on men in the matter of her expenses. There is no value judgement being made here. This is no more than a functional distribution of duties, except that, the inter-acting precedence between duties which exists elsewhere exists here too. In short, the two reasons given show that the precedence of men does not lower the status of women, nor does this hold any special gain for them. Whatever gain there is, it reverts back to women after all.

The profile of a good wife

The verse begins, with a working rule - that man is charged with a duty-bound authority over women. The text then describes women, the good ones and the bad ones. It says: فَالصّٰلِحٰتُ قٰنِتٰتٌ حٰفِظٰتٌ لِّلْغَيْبِ بِمَا حَفِظَ اللّٰهُ. It means that women who are righteous accept this rule of the precedence of men and obey them, and when they are not with them, they stand guard on their own selves, as well as on what the husband has earned for the family. It goes without saying that the protection of the personal honour and modesty of a woman, and that of everything else in the house under her charge are basic to the happiness that lies behind a successful home management. Although the duty of a woman to guard herself and to look after the home is not restricted to a situation where the husband is not at home, but is equally applicable during his presence also, yet the Holy Qur'ān has mentioned the state of his 'absence' only, because it is in the absence of the husband that a woman is more susceptible to showing negligence; therefore, this situation has been mentioned in express terms. The message is that what has to be avoided is showing a lot of concern and alertness while men are present in the house, but neglecting to abide by these rules of conduct when they are out of sight.

It was, most probably, in explanation of this verse that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said:

خَيْرُ النِّسَآءِ اِمْرَأَةٌ إِذَا نَظَرْتَ إِلَيْهَا سرتك، وَإِذَا اَمَرْتَهَا اطَاعتك، وَإِذَا غبتَ عَنْهَا حفظتك فى مالها و نفسها

"The best of women is a woman who, when you look at her, makes you pleased with her; and when you ask her to do something, she obeys you; and when you are absent, she guards her self, and her belongings."

Since these responsibilities placed on women, that is, the guarding and protection of their modesty, and of what the husband leaves in her charge, are not that easy to take care of, therefore, Allah Almighty has, immediately after it, declared: بِمَا حَفِظَ اللّٰهُ that is, Allah Almighty helps women when they so protect. It is with His support known as the *Taufīq* of Allah, that they succeed in grappling with these heavy responsibilities. Had this not been there, the temptations of self and satan stand surrounding every man and woman all the time. Then, women are particularly weaker in some areas of capabilities as compared to men, yet, when it comes to carrying out these responsibilities, they tend to be much stronger than men. All this is an outcome of Allah's *Taufīq* and help. This is the reason why women, as a general rule, are less involved in sinful immodesties as compared to men.

The merit of women who cooperate with their husbands, as evident from this verse, has also been widely reported in several *aḥādīth*. In one such *ḥadīth*, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said that, for a woman who is dutiful to her husband, there are birds in the air and fish in the sea and angels in the skies and beasts in the forests who pray for her forgiveness by the Lord. (al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ)

How to correct an uncooperative wife

The text turns to women who are either straight disobedient to their husbands or fail to cooperate with them in running family affairs in the recognized manner. The Holy Qur'ān gives men three methods of correcting their behaviour. These are to be followed in the order they have been mentioned. So, the verse says: وَالّٰتِیْ تَخَافُوْنَ نُشُوْزَهُنَّ فَعِظُوْهُنَّ وَاهْجُرُوْهُنَّ فِی الْمَضَاجِعِ وَاضْرِبُوْهُنَّ It means: If you fear or face disobedience from women, the first step towards their correction is that you should talk it over with them nicely and softly. Still, if they remain adamant and do not change their attitude by conciliatory counsel alone, the next step is not to share the same bed with them, so that they may realize the displeasure of the husband as expressed through this symbolic separation, and may feel sorry for their conduct. The Holy Qur'ān uses the

words: فِى الْمَضَاجِعِ at this point, meaning 'in beds'. It is from here that Muslim jurists have deduced that this staying apart should be limited to 'beds' and not to the 'house' itself. In other words, the woman should not be left alone in the house, something which is bound to hurt her feeling much more and which makes the possibility of further straining of relations far stronger.

A Companion reports:

قُلْتُ يَا رَسُوْلَ اللّٰهِ مَا حَقُّ زَوْجَةِ اَحَدِنَا عَلَيْهِ قَالَ: اَنْ تُطْعِمَهَا اِذَ اَطْعَمْتَ وَتَكْسُوْهَا اِذَا اكْتَسَيْتَ، وَلَا تَضْرِبِ الْوَجْهَ وَلَا تقبّح وَلَا تَهْجُرْ اِلَّا فِى الْبَيْتِ

(مشكوة، ص ٢٨١)

I said: 'O Messenger of Allah, what right do our wives have on us?' He said: 'That you feed them when you eat; provide them with apparels to wear when you have these for yourselves; and do not hit the face; and do not say abuses to her; and do not leave them apart unless it be within the house. (Mishkāt, p.281)

If this gentle admonition fails to produce any effect, some corrective form of a little 'beating' has also been allowed as a last resort, of course, in a manner that it does not affect the body, nor goes to the undesirable limits of hurt or injury to the skin or bones. As for slapping or hitting on the face, it is absolutely forbidden.

The first two methods of admonition, that is seeking to convince and leaving apart in beds, are more or less an exercise in nobility against arrogant lack of compromise. Prophets and their righteous followers have spoken in favour of it. That they practiced what they preached is also a proved fact. But, this third method of admonition, that is, beating, has been permitted as a forced option in a particular mode. Right along with this option given to men, it appears in *ḥadīth*: وَلَنْ يَّضْرِبَ خِيَارُكُمْ which means that 'good men among you will never beat women.' Thus, such an action is nowhere reported from the blessed prophets of Allah.

According to a narration from the daughter of Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضى الله عنه as reported by Ibn Sa'd and al-Baihaqī, the beating of women was absolutely prohibited in the early days, but this resulted in their becoming much too oppressive, following which the permission was

reinstated.

The present verse relates to one such event, which can be termed as the background of its revelation. Sayyidnā Zayd ibn Zuhayr رضی اللہ عنہ had married his daughter, Sayyidah Ḥabībah رضی اللہ عنہا to Sayyidnā Sa'd ibn Rabī' رضی اللہ عنہ During a dispute over something, the husband slapped her. Sayyidah Ḥabībah complained to her father. He took her to the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم . He declared that Ḥabibāh has the right to hit Sa'd as hard as he did. Hearing this decision of their master, they started back home to take their revenge upon Sa'd. Thereupon, this verse was revealed in which the beating of women as the very last option has been permitted, and no retaliation or revenge against men was allowed. So, soon after the revelation of this verse, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم called both of them back and asked them to abide by the injunction from Allah Almighty, and abrogated his first directive permitting the seeking of revenge.

Towards the end of the verse, it is said: 'Then, if they obey you, do not seek a way against them'. It means that should the women mend themselves after that triple-stepped approach, men should forgive and forgo the past events and avoid looking for ways to find fault with them on flimsy issues as the power of Allah controls everything.

Conclusions

What comes out as a basic principle from this verse is that, no doubt the rights of men and women are similar as detailed in previous verses, yet great care has been taken to ensure that the rights of women are duly fulfilled because they are weaker as compared to men and cannot wrest rights from men by using their physical power. But this equality in rights does to mean that there should be no difference of given graces or functional precedences between men and women. That men have been given a degree of precedence over women is a manifestation of Divine wisdom and justice. There are two reasons for it:

1. The genus of man, in view of its mental-physical excellences, has God-given precedence over the genus of woman, which is not possible for the woman to acquire. The case of individuals and rarities is a different matter.

2. Men take care of everything women need from what they earn and have. The first reason given above is something over which men or women have no control, while the second reason is something which becomes operative by choice and effort. It can also be said here that according to the commonsense and justice, there should be two things present while deciding as to who, from among the children of one father and mother, shall be technically authorized to take care of the other. First: Whoever is so authorized should have the mental-physical capability to carry out the demands of authority. Second: The agreement and pleasure of the one to be taken care of under such authority. The first reason mentioned by the Holy Qur'ān (in the words بِمَا فَضَّلَ اللّٰهُ بَعْضَهُمْ عَلٰى بَعْضٍ) focuses on the ability of man to function with authority while the second reason (mentioned in the words وَبِمَآ اَنْفَقُوْا مِنْ اَمْوَالِهِمْ) refers to the agreement and pleasure of the party which would operate under that authority. It is obvious that at the time of marriage when a woman, in consideration of her dower and total maintenance, agrees to enter into the marital bond - she agrees to the authority of the husband and accepts it with pleasure.

In short, the principle of family life given in the first sentence of the present verse is that, despite the rights of men and women being equal in almost everything, there is, for men, a certain precedence laced with authority vis-a-vis women, and they operate thereunder.

Under this basic principle, there came to be two classes of women in practical life. One of them stood by this basic principle, abided by their convenant, accepted the functional authority of man and obeyed him in deference to the wise Divine arrangement. Then there was the other class of women which failed to live by this principle in its fullness. As for the first-mentioned class, it provides for itself a perfect guarantee of family peace and well-being. It needs no correction of course in its life.

Such correction is, however, very much in order for the second class of women. For this purpose, the second sentence of the verse offers a compact system which would help correct things within the four walls of the house and the tussle between the husband and the wife would be diffused and settled for good right there without any third party having to intercede in between them. So, men have been

told: If you sense some lack of cooperation from women, the first thing you should do is to talk to them explaining things in a way which helps change their mind and attitude. If that works, the issue is resolved right there. The woman is rescued from a permanent sin and the man from an aching heart, and the two of them from some ever-stinging anguish. Now, if this person-to-person talk fails to bring results, the second stage is to sleep on a separate bed as an indicator of your displeasure, and may be as a device to bring about a change of attitude through the sending of a warning signal. This is ordinary admonition but good enough for a warning. If the woman gets the message, the dispute ends right there. But, if she ignores even this soft measure of correction and persists with her crooked ways, there is the third step in which token beating is also permitted, the extreme limit of which is that it should produce no effect on the body. The use of this method of admonition (beating of woman) was not liked by the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم who, quite on the contrary, said that gentlemen would not do that. However, if this token reprimand as the last resort does result in normalcy of relations, the main objective stands achieved anyway. That men have been given three options to correct women in this verse is coupled with the words فَإِنْ أَطَعْنَكُمْ فَلَا تَبْغُوا عَلَيْهِنَّ سَبِيلًا said at the end of it. It means that, should the women start listening to you after these three-step ways of correction, do not go for hair-splitting and start levelling more accusations. The better course is to forgo, realizing that the measure of precedence over women given to you by Allah Almighty is not absolute, for the precedence of Allah Almighty hangs heavy over you. If you exceed the limits set for you, it will be you who is going to take the punishment.

The role of the family arbitrator in disputes

The arrangement described so far was to help tempers cool off within the privacy of the house keeping it restricted to the married couple. But, there are times when the family feud becomes long-drawn. It may be because the woman is temperamentally obstinate and contumacious, or it may be the fault of the man who may have been unjustly oppressive. Whatever it actually is, one thing is certain that the unfortunate tussle will not remain restricted within the four walls of the house; it will definitely spread out. Then, as usual, supporters of one party will go about maligning the others with all sort

of accusations. This will cause tempers of parties to rise and what started as the disagreement of two individuals will turn into a confrontation between two families.

It is to block the road to this terrible discord that, in the second verse, the Holy Qur'ān addresses government authorities of the time, the guardians of the parties concerned and their supporters, and the general body of Muslims, and suggests a decent method which would cool down tempers, shut out avenues of accusations and make a compromise between the affected parties possible, so that the dispute which, no doubt, could not remain restricted to the couple's home, would at least be settled within their families and not go to a court of law to become public knowledge.

This particular method requires that concerned officials of the government or the guardians of the parties or a body of Muslims which has the necessary integrity, influence and authority should take charge and appoint two arbitrators to hep bring about a compromise between the parties concerned - taking one arbitrator from the man's family and the other from that of the woman. At both these places, the Holy Qur'ān has used the word, "*ḥakam*" for these appointees whereby it pin-points the necessary qualifications of these two persons, that is, they should have the capability to decide the dispute between the two parties; and this capability, as obvious, will be found in a person who is both knowledgeable and trustworthy.

In short, the rule that emerges from here is that a "*ḥakam*" or arbitrator from the man's family and another from that of the woman should be appointed and sent to the husband and wife. Now, as for what they are going to do when they meet them and as to what rights they have in this matter - this the Holy Qur'ān does not determine. However, it does add a remark at the end: إِنْ يُرِيدَآ إِصْلَاحًا يُوَفِّقِ اللّٰهُ بَيْنَهُمَا which means: If these two arbitrators desire to set things right, Allah Almighty will help them bring about harmony between the husband and the wife. So, two things emerge from this sentence:

1. If both arbitrators have good intentions and genuinely wish to bring about peace between the dissenting couple, there will be unseen help from Allah Almighty and they shall succeed in their mission, and it will be through their efforts that Allah Almighty will create love and

harmony in the hearts of the couple. This leads to the conclusion that, in cases where mutual rapport is not restored, it may be because one of the arbitrators lacks perfect sincerity while pursuing the goal of peace-making.

2. The purpose of appointing these two arbitrators, as also understood from this sentence, is to bring about peace and amity between the husband and the wife and does not include anything beyond that. However, it would be something else if the parties affected by the mutual dispute agree to appoint these two arbitrators as their representatives and their attorneys in all respects in which case they would be admitting that any decision given by the two arbitrators jointly will be acceptable to and binding on both of them. Under this situation, the two arbitrators shall have absolute authority to decide their case. If both agree on divorce as the solution, they can effect a divorce. If they both decide that the women should be released under *khul'*, a form of dissolution of marriage, the *khul'* shall come into effect, and their decision shall be binding on the parties. From among the pious elders, this is the position held by Ḥasan al-Baṣrī and Imām Abū Ḥanīfah. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī, etc.)

Cited in this connection is an incident which occurred in the presence of Sayyidnā 'Alī كرم الله وجهه . There too, one finds the proof that the two arbitrators referred to above do not have any intrinsic right other than that of making peace between the husband and wife - unless, of course, the parties concerned authorize them fully to decide as they deem fit. This incident, as narrated by 'Ubaidah al-Salmānī, appears in the Sunnan of al-Baihaqī and is being reported below.

A man and a woman came to Sayyidnā 'Alī كرم الله وجهه along with groups of people accompanying both. Sayyidnā 'Alī asked them to appoint an arbitrator, one from the man's family and another from the woman's. When arbitrators were appointed, he addressed them both: 'Do you know your responsibility? Do you know what you have to do? Hear me. If both of you agree to keep the husband and wife together and make peace between them, then do it. And if you come to the conclusion that matters cannot be set right between them or that they will not stay right later on, and both of you concur with the option that a separation between them is the expedient course, then do it.' When

the woman heard this, she said: 'I accept this. Let these two arbitrators act in accordance with Divine law and I shall accept any decision they give whether it meets my wishes or goes against.' But, the husband said: 'Separation and divorce are things I am not going to accept under any condition. However, I authorize the arbitrators to ask me to pay whatever financial penalty they impose and let my wife return to me in peace.' Sayyidnā 'Alī كرم الله وجهه said: 'No. You too should authorize the arbitrators in the same manner as was done by the woman.'

From this incident, some *mujtahid Imāms* deduced the principle that these arbitrators have an inherent authority to divorce as was done by Sayyidnā 'Alī who asked the parties concerned to do that, while the great Imām Abū Ḥanīfah and Ḥasan al-Baṣrī have taken the position that, had it been an inherent power of the arbitrators to divorce there was no need for Sayydinā 'Alī to obtain the authorization from the parties concerned. Here, the very effort to seek the agreement of the parties is a proof of the fact that these arbitrators do not have such an inherent power. Nevertheless, they do become authorized if the husband and wife delegate the necessary authority to them.

This teaching of the Holy Qur'ān opens a new outlet of resolving mutual disputes, something which saves people from the botheration of going to courts and government officials and gives them an opportunity to iron out a good deal of their disputes and claims through family-oriented arbitration.

Arbitration in other disputes as well

Muslim jurists say that the appointment of two arbitrators to make peace between two parties in dispute, is not limited to the disputes between a husband and a wife. It can be profitably used in other areas of discord. In fact, it should be so used, specially when the parties involved are related to each other, because a court decision is a short-term solution of the basic problem. What happens after is that such decisions leave the germs of hatred and hostility in the hearts of those affected and which reapear after a passage of time in forms that are much too unpleasant. Sayyidnā 'Umar, may Allah be pleased with him, had promulgated an order for his judges which said:

رُدُّوا الْقَضَاءَ بَيْنَ ذَوِى الْأَرْحَامِ حَتّٰى يَصْطَلِحُوْا فَإِنَّ فَصْلَ الْقَضَاءِ يُوْرِثُ الضَّغَائِنَ (معين الحكام، ص ٢١٤)

"Send disputes between relatives back to them so that they make peace with the help of each other, as a court decision breeds heart burnings and hostility.

Although this Farūqī directive concerns disputes rising in between relatives, yet, the reason given in this directive (that is, court decisions tend to create hatred ad hostility in hearts) is a reason which covers not only the relatives but non-relatives as well. Wisdom lies in saving all Muslims from mutual hatred and hostility. Therefore, the Muslim jurists are of the view that it is appropriate for officials and judges that they, before hearing the cases formally, should make an effort to find a way out whereby the disputing parties get together and agree on mutual conciliation. (See al-Tarāblusi, Mu'īn al-ḥukkām p.214 and also Ibn al-Shaḥnah: Lisān al-ḥukkām).

Though brief, yet these two verses present a comprehensive system of family life which, if put into practice, could help eliminate a lot of disputes, hatreds and hostilities from the world. Men and women would live in peace among their families, secure against all those local dissensions which turn into all sorts of tribal, racial, national, even international feuds.

In the end, let us recapitulate the great Qur'ānic mechanism of how to quash family feuds - a virtual gift to the whole world:

1. Resolve family disputes within the house using one method after the other.

2. When this is not possible, government officials or the kinsfolk make peace between the disputing parties through two arbitrators, so that, the dispute does not go out of the larger family circle, even if it goes out of the house itself.

3. When this too is not possible and the matter goes to the court finally, it is the duty of the judicial authority to investigate into the case background of both parties and come up with a decision which is just.

It may be noted that by saying إِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ عَلِيْمًا خَبِيْرًا (Surely, Allah is All-

Knowing, All-Aware) warning has been given to the two arbitrators as well to the effect that they should keep in mind that no injustice or crookedness from them will go unnoticed for they shall be appearing before the Being who knows all and is aware of everything.

Verses 36 - 38

وَاعْبُدُوا اللّٰهَ وَلَا تُشْرِكُوْا بِهٖ شَيْـًٔا وَّبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ اِحْسَانًا وَّبِذِی
الْقُرْبٰی وَالْيَتٰمٰی وَالْمَسٰكِيْنِ وَالْجَارِ ذِی الْقُرْبٰی وَالْجَارِ الْجُنُبِ
وَالصَّاحِبِ بِالْجَنْۢبِ وَابْنِ السَّبِيْلِ ۙ وَمَا مَلَكَتْ اَيْمَانُكُمْ ؕ اِنَّ
اللّٰهَ لَا يُحِبُّ مَنْ كَانَ مُخْتَالًا فَخُوْرَا ﴿۳۶﴾ نِ الَّذِيْنَ يَبْخَلُوْنَ وَ
يَاْمُرُوْنَ النَّاسَ بِالْبُخْلِ وَيَكْتُمُوْنَ مَآ اٰتٰهُمُ اللّٰهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهٖ ؕ
وَاَعْتَدْنَا لِلْكٰفِرِيْنَ عَذَابًا مُّهِيْنًا ﴿۳۷﴾ وَالَّذِيْنَ يُنْفِقُوْنَ اَمْوَالَهُمْ
رِئَآءَ النَّاسِ وَلَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَلَا بِالْيَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ ؕ وَمَنْ يَّكُنِ
الشَّيْطٰنُ لَهٗ قَرِيْنًا فَسَآءَ قَرِيْنًا ﴿۳۸﴾

And worship Allah and do not associate with Him anything, and be good to parents and to kinsmen and orphans and the needy and the close neighbour and the distant neighbour and the companion at your side and the wayfarer and to those owned by you. Surely, Allah does not like those who are arrogant, proud, [36] **those who are miserly and bid people to be miserly, and conceal what Allah has given them of His grace -- and We have prepared for the disbelievers a humiliating punishment** [37] **-- and (for) those who spend their wealth to show off before people and do not believe in Allah and the Last Day. And for whomsoever Satan is a companion, then, evil he is as a companion.** [38]

Sequence

It will be noticed that human rights have remained the main focus of attention since the beginning of the present Sūrah upto this point. These related to orphans, the women and inheritance. Taken up now are rights of parents, relatives, neighbours and those of human beings in general. Since a perfect fulfillment of these rights is possible only at

the hands of a person whose orientation to Allah, His Messenger and to the answerability of the Last Day is correct and strong, and who avoids miserliness, arrogance and affectation, being impediments to all positive efforts, the text presents the need to believe in the Oneness of Allah, to avoid any association with His pristine divinity, and to stay away from the rejection of the meeting on the Last Day. Also taken to task are ways of the disbelievers who disobey the Messenger of Allah and revel in their miserliness.

Commentary

The reason why *Tauḥīd* precedes rights

There are many wise considerations in opening the roster of rights with the exhortation to worship Allah alone and not to associate with Him anything in that worship. One of these, and a basic one indeed, is having the fear of Allah and the conscious concern to fulfill His rights. A person who is neglectful on that score can hardly be expected to remain particular about fulfilling the rights of anybody else. He will find one or the other excuse to satisfy his immediate circle of relatives and friends, to keep his prestige in the society or to escape the law of the government. What really forces him to honour human rights, watched or unwatched, is nothing but the fear of Allah and the sense of responsibility before Him. This fear and this *taqwā* is achieved through nothing but *tauḥīd,* the firm belief in the Oneness of Allah to the total exclusion of everything else in that unicity. This is why it was appropriate to remind man about the Oneness of Allah and the need to worship Him before describing the rights of relatives and others.

The rights of parents come first after the message of *Tauḥīd*

By taking up the rights of parents immediately after the command to worship Allah as is His due, it is being suggested that, no doubt all blessings and favours are really from Allah Almighty, yet seen in terms of worldly means, the frequency of favours received by man, closest next to those of Allah Almighty, are those he receives from his parents. This is because they are, given the chain of causation, the very fountain-head of their being. And in all those stages of trial from the birth of a child to his young age, the parents are the ones who take care of the being, sustenance and growth of man to the best of their ability and God-given means. This is why the command to worship and

obey Allah has also been supplemented with the mention of the rights of parents at other places in the Holy Qur'ān. At one place it is said: أَنِ اشْكُرْلِيْ وَلِوَالِدَيْكَ (Be grateful to Me, and to your parents.) (31:14). At another place, it is said: وَإِذْ أَخَذْنَا مِيثَاقَ بَنِيٓ إِسْرَآءِيلَ لَا تَعْبُدُونَ إِلَّا اللَّهَ وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا (And when We made the children of Isra'īl take a pledge: You shall not worship anyone but Allah; and to parents you shall be good...) (2:83).

In the verses quoted above, the text does not say that one should fulfil the rights of parents or serve them. The word used here is *Iḥsān* (doing good) which, being far more comprehensive, includes spending to support them as needed, to be of service to them physically when so required, not to talk to them in a voice too sharp or too loud causing disrespect, not to say anything to them which may break their heart, and not to treat their friends and well-wishers in any manner which hurts them. On the contrary, one should do everything possible to comfort and please them. Even if the parents have fallen short in fulfilling the due rights of children, the children should never take it as an excuse for their own ill-treatment.

Sayyidnā Mu'ādh ibn Jabal رضی اللہ عنہ says that, out of the ten things the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم had asked me to be particular about, one was: 'do not associate anyone with Allah even if you are killed or burnt alive'; and the second was: 'Do not disobey or hurt your parents even if they ask you to leave your children and family.' (Musnad Aḥmad)

Besides the great emphasis laid on obedience to parents and on treating them well as in the sayings of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم there are countless merits and grades of reward promised for those who do so. A *ḥadīth* in al-Bukhārī and Muslim reports that the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said: 'One who wishes to have his earnings and life increased by the blessing of Allah should fulfill the rights of his relatives.' A narration in Tirmidhī says: 'The pleasure of Allah lies in the pleasure of the father and the displeasure of Allah, in the displeasure of the father.' Al-Baihaqī reports in Shu'ab al-'Īmān that the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said: 'When a son who is obedient to his parents looks at them with love and regard, every glance of his brings forth for him the reward of an accepted Ḥajj.' According to another narration from al-Baihaqī, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said: 'Allah

Almighty forgives most sins but one who disobeys and hurts his parents is condemned to face all sorts of unforeseen troubles right here in this mortal world, much before the ultimate reckoning of the Hereafter.'

The emphasis on treating relatives well

After having mentioned parents, the verse emphasizes the good treatment of all relatives. A very comprehensive and well-known verse of the Qur'ān which the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم very often used to recite at the end of his sermons, presents the same subject in this manner:

إِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَالْإِحْسَانِ وَإِيْتَآءِ ذِي الْقُرْبٰى

Still recited in the *Khuṭbah* during Friday prayers all over the world, the verse means: 'Allah commands you to do justice and be good to all and to fulfill the rights of the relatives. (16:90)' This includes serving relatives to the best of one's ability, as well as keeping in touch with them. Sayyidnā Salmān ibn 'Āmir رضی اللہ عنہ reports that the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said: '*Ṣadaqah*, when given to the poor and needy, surely brings the reward reserved for such charity, but, when given to a kinsman, it brings a twofold reward - one for the charitable giving and the other for having fulfilled the rights imposed by kinship.' (Musnad Aḥmad, Nasāi, & Tirmidhī)

Let us keep in mind that the need to fulfill the rights of parents is the first priority followed by that of relatives in general.

The rights of the orphans and the needy

The third group mentioned in the verse is that of 'the orphans and the needy' whose rights were already taken up in some detail earlier in the Sūrah. But, by recalling it under the general head of relatives, the hint given is that one should consider helping orphaned children and helpless people as necessary as one would do for his or her own relatives.

The rights of the neighbour

Then appears 'the close neighbour' at number four, and the distant neighbour,' at five. The Arabic word, '*al-jār*' means 'the neighbour'. The verse describes its two kinds - the close and the distant. These two kinds have been explained variously by the noble Companions may

Allah be pleased with them all.

Generally, commentators say that 'a close neighbour' is one who lives next to your house, and 'the distant neighbour' is one who lives at some distance from it.

Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہما said that 'a close relative' means one who is a neighbour and a relative at the same time which makes him the holder of two rights; and 'the distant neighbour' means one who is simply a neighbour and is no relative and who has, therefore, been mentioned later.

Some commentators have said that 'a close neighbour' is one who is part of the Muslim community and is a Muslim while 'a distant neighbour' refers to a non-Muslim neighbour.

The truth of the matter is that the words of the Holy Qur'ān lend to all these probable meanings. It is no doubt reasonable and lawful to have a difference in degrees between different neighbours, either on the basis of their being relative or non-relative, or on the basis of their being Muslim or non-Muslim. However, it is agreed upon that a neighbour, close or distant, related or unrelated, Muslim or non-Muslim, has the essential right that he be helped and cared for to the best of one's ability.

However, a person who has some other right as well, besides his right as a neighbour, he will have a degree of precedence as compared to others. The Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم has himself explained this when he said: 'Some neighbours have one right, some others have two, still some others have three. The neighbour with one right is a non-Muslim with no bond of kinship; the neighbour with two rights is not only a neighbour but a Muslim too; the neighbour with three rights is a neighbour, a Muslim and a relative, all in one. (Ibn Kathīr)

The Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said: 'Jibra'īl has always been telling me to be helpful and caring with one's neighbour, so much so that I started thinking that may be the neighbours will also be included as sharers in inheritance. (al-Bukhārī and Muslim)

According to a narration in al-Tirmidhi and the Musnad of Aḥmad, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said: 'The best and the most superior is the best in relationship with his neighbours'. And a *ḥadīth* in the

Musnad of Aḥmad reports: 'It is not permissible for a neighbour to eat his fill while his next door neighbour is hungry.'

The right of the Companion at your side

Mentioned at number six is 'the companion at your side'. Translated literally, it includes a travel companion sitting by your side in a rail compartment, an aeroplane, a bus or a car. It also includes a person who is sitting with you in any common meeting.

The way the Sharī'ah of Islam has made the rights of regular neighbours, close or distant, a matter of obligation, it has likewise made equally obligatory the right of good company enjoyed by a person who sits next to somebody for a little while in some meeting or journey - which includes everyone, Muslim or non-Muslim, related or unrelated, as equals. The instruction to treat such a person nicely is significant, the lowest degree of which is that you cause no pain to anyone with your word or deed, you say nothing which may hurt the feelings of the other person, you do nothing which embarrasses, annoys or troubles him, such as, a puff of cigarette blown towards his face, or a spit of things chewed deposited by his side, or a style of sitting which leaves very little space for the other person to sit.

No wonder, if people started following this instruction of the Holy Qur'ān, the common disputes between passengers of trains, particularly in countries with overcrowded modes of transportation, would be all over - if everyone were to think that he needs just about enough space to seat one person. This much is his right, but he does not have the right to occupy anymore space beyond that. The person sitting next to him has as much right to sit in that train as he does.

Some commentators have said that 'a distant neighbour' includes everyone who works by your side in some job or vocation, in industry or wage-earning, in office work, whether on the station of duty, or in travel. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī)

The right of the wayfarer

This appears at number seven. A wayfarer is a person who, during your tavel status, comes to you, or becomes your guest. Since this stranger Muslim or non-Muslim has no relative or friend around in the given situation, the Holy Qur'ān by considering his predicament as a

human being - has made the fulfillment of his right too as something obligatory. It means that one should treat him well, as much as possible and convenient.

The rights of bondmen, bondwomen, servants and employees

Concluding the list at number eight, it is said: وَمَا مَلَكَتْ اَيْمَانُكُمْ (and those owned by you) which means bondmen and bondwomen owned. Their right too - that they be treated well - has been made equally obligatory. It means that one should not fall short in making sure that they have food to eat and dress to wear, and also that they are not burdened with jobs beyond their ability to handle.

Though, given the lexical meaning of the verse which is clearly referring to 'the owned', that is, the bondmen and bondwomen, but as based on the same analogy and on the sayings of the Holy Prophet ﷺ these rules cover servants and employees as well, for they too have the same right. There should be no niggardliness or delay in giving them their due salary, meals and so forth, and also that they are not burdened with jobs beyond their ability.

Arrogance hinders the fulfillment of rights

The last sentence of verse 36: اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يُحِبُّ مَنْ كَانَ مُخْتَالًا فَخُوْرًا (Surely, Allah does not like those who are arrogant, proud) is really a unifying complement of what has been said immediately earlier. In other words, anyone falling short of fulfilling the rights of the eight kinds of people serially mentioned earlier, must be none else but the arrogant and the proud - those who have an offensively heightened sense of superiority and those who love lording over others to exact esteem from them. May Allah keep all Muslims safe from it.

There are many *aḥādīth* carrying stern warnings against arrogance and pre-Islāmic vainglory:

عن ابن مسعود رضى الله عنه قال قال رسول الله ﷺ لايدخل النار احد فى قلبه مثقال حبّة من خردل من ايمان ولا يدخل الجنة احد فى قلبه مثقال حبّة من خردل من كبر (مشكوة ص ٤٣٣ بحواله مسلم)

Sayyidnā Ibn Mas'ūd رضى الله عنه has narrated that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: 'A person who has in his heart faith worth the weight of a mustard seed will not go to the Hell; and a person who has in his heart arrogance worth the weight of a

mustard seed will not go to Paradise.' (Mishkāt, p. 433, vide Muslim)

Quoted here is another *hadīth* which also carries a definition of arrogance:

عن ابن مسعود رضى الله عنه قال قال رسول الله ﷺ لا يدخل الجنة من كان فى قلبه مثقال ذرة من كبر فقال رجل ان الرجل يحب ان يكون ثوبه حسنا ونعله حسنا، قال إن الله تعالى جميل يحب الجمال، الكبر بطر الحق وغمط الناس (مشكوة ص ٤٣٣ بحواله مسلم)

Sayyidnā Ibn Mas'ūd رضى الله عنه has narrated that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: 'Whoever has in his heart arrogance worth the weight of a particle will not go to Paradise.' Then, someone asked: 'How about people who like that their clothes be good, and their shoes too ... (Is this arrogance?)' He said: 'Allah is beautiful; He likes beauty. Arrogance is wanton disregard of the (other person's) right and the holding of people in contempt.' (Mishkāt, p. 433,vide Muslim)

Then begins verse 37 with اَلَّذِيْنَ يَبْخَلُوْنَ which describes the nature of the arrogant who are stingy in giving rights which it is obligatory to give, fail to understand their responsibilities and go on to the negative extreme of persuading others to take to this bad habit through their word and deed.

The verse has used the word, '*bukhl*' (niggardliness) to describe this trait of character, a word which, in the generally approved sense, is applied for shortcoming in giving financial rights. But, looking at the background of the verse's revelation, it becomes obvious that the word, '*bukhl*' has been used here in its general sense which includes close-fistedness in money and knowledge both.

A narration from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه tells us that this verse was revealed about the Jews of Madīnah. They were very arrogant, and extremely miserly. When it came to spending money, they were miserably miserly. They also concealed the knowledge they received through their Scriptures which carried the prophecies about the coming of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم . These also included clear signs of his appearance. But, the Jews, despite being convinced of these prophecies, acted niggardly. They never acted to fulfill the

dictates of this knowledge, neither did they pass on the message to others who could act in accordance with it.

Based on this, it is then said that people who are miserly with wealth given by Allah - in matters of knowledge and faith - are ungrateful to Allah and fail to acknowledge His blessings. For them Allah has prepared a humiliating punishment which they cannot escape.

About the merit of giving and the demerit of miserliness, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم has said:

ما من يوم يصبح العباد فيه الا ملكان ينزلان فيقول احدهما اللهم اعط منفقًا خلفا ويقول الاخر اللهم اعط ممسكا تلفًا (بخاری و مسلم)

"Every morning two angels descend. One of them says: 'O Allah, bless him who spends in the way of good'; and the other says: 'O Allah, send destruction on (the wealth of) the miser.'" (al-Bukhārī & Muslim, from Abū Hurairah رضی اللہ عنہ).

عن اسماء رضى الله عنها قالت قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم انفقى و لا تحصى فيحصى الله عليك ولا توعى فيوعى الله عليك وارضخى ما استطعت ط (بخاری و مسلم)

'Give. Do not calculate, for Allah will then calculate in your case. And do not withhold, for Allah will then withhold in your case. And give whatever you can." (al-Bukhārī & Muslim from Sayyidah Asmā' رضی اللہ عنہا).

Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضی اللہ عنہ narrates that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said:

السخیُّ قريب من الله، قريب من الجنة، قريب من الناس، والبخيل بعيد من الله، بعيد من الجنة بعيد من الناس قريب من النار ط والجاهل سخى احب الى الله من عابد بخيل . (ترمذی)

"The generous person is close to Allah, close to Paradise, close to people; while the miser is far from Allah, far from Paradise, far from people - close to the fire; and the generous ignoramus is dearer to Allah than a miserly devotee. (a person who has devoted himself for worship)" (Tirmidhī)

Sayyidnā Abū Sa'īd رضی اللہ عنہ narrates that the Holy Prophet ﷺ

said:

وعن ابى سعيد قال قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم خصلتان لا
تجتمعان فى مؤمن، البخل وسوء الخلق (ترمذى)

"Two traits cannot get combined in a true Muslim: miserliness and bad morals." (Tirmidhī)

In verse 38, beginning with the words, وَالَّذِيْنَ يُنفِقُوْنَ another trait in the character of the arrogant has been described. Ordinarily they themselves hold back any spending in the way of Allah and persuade others to do the same. Nevertheless, when they wish to show off before people, they do spend. Since these people do not believe in Allah and the Last Day, the question of spending their wealth for the good pleasure of Allah and with the intention of earning rewards in the life-to-come just does not arise. Such people are the accomplices of Satan, therefore, the end of it all will be no different than the end of their comrade Satan.

This verse tells us that the way it is disgraceful to be niggardly and tardy in fulfilling due rights, very similarly, it is also extremely bad to spend to show off or to spend on heads which are purposeless. A good deed aimed at drawing applause from people - and which is not for Allah exclusively - is a deed not acceptable in the sight of Allah. In *ḥadīth*, it has been declared as *shirk* (associating others in the divinity of Allah).

Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضى الله عنه narrates that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said:

قال الله تعالى انا اغنى الشركاء عن الشرك من عمل عملا أشرك فيه
معي غيرى تركته وشركه

"Allah Almighty says: I am absolutely free of any need to have partners. Whoever does a (good) deed and associates in it someone else with Me, I leave him (unhelped) with this deed (of associating partners with Me)".

Sayyidnā Shaddād ibn Aws رضى الله عنه narrates that he heard the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم say:

وعن شداد بن اوس قال سمعت رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم من صلى

يرائی فقد اشرك، ومن صَام يرائی فقد اشرك، ومن تصدّق يرائی فقد اشرك

(احمد بحواله مشكوة)

"Whoever performed *ṣalāh* to show off, committed *shirk*; and whoever fasted to show off, committed *shirk*; and whoever gave in charity to show off, committed *shirk*." (Aḥmad, as cited by Mishkāt).

Sayyidnā Maḥmūd ibn Labīd رضی اللہ عنہ narrates that the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said:

عن محمود بن لبيد انّ النبی صلی الله عليه وسلم قال ان اخوف ما اخاف عليكم الشرك الاصغر، قالوا يا رسول الله وَمَا الشرك الاصغر؟ قال الرّياء

(احمد بحواله مشكوة)

"What fills me with grave apprehensions about you is the minor *shirk*." The Companions asked: "O Messenger of Allah, what is the minor *shirk*?" He said: "*riyā'* (i.e. to do a good deed just to show off"). (Aḥmad, as cited by Mishkāt)

Here, a narration from al-Baihāqī adds that, on the Day of Doom, when the reward for good deeds will be given out, Allah Almighty will say to the persons committing *riyā'* i.e. the persons who did good deed just to earn the applause of the people:

"Go to those you wanted to see you doing good deeds in the mortal world and then find out for yourself if they have the reward for your deeds."

Verses 39 - 42

وَمَا ذَا عَلَيْهِمْ لَوْ اٰمَنُوْا بِاللّٰهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ وَاَنْفَقُوْا مِمَّا رَزَقَهُمُ اللّٰهُ ؕ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ بِهِمْ عَلِيْمًا ﴿۳۹﴾ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يَظْلِمُ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ ۚ وَاِنْ تَكُ حَسَنَةً يُّضٰعِفْهَا وَيُؤْتِ مِنْ لَّدُنْهُ اَجْرًا عَظِيْمًا ﴿۴۰﴾ فَكَيْفَ اِذَا جِئْنَا مِنْ كُلِّ اُمَّةٍ ۭبِشَهِيْدٍ وَّجِئْنَا بِكَ عَلٰى هٰٓؤُلَاۗءِ شَهِيْدًا ﴿۴۱﴾ يَوْمَئِذٍ يَّوَدُّ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا وَعَصَوُا الرَّسُوْلَ لَوْ تُسَوّٰى بِهِمُ الْاَرْضُ ؕ وَلَا يَكْتُمُوْنَ اللّٰهَ حَدِيْثًا ﴿۴۲﴾

What harm was there for them if they had believed in

Allah and the Last Day and spent out of what Allah had given them. And Allah knows all about them. [39]

Surely, Allah does not wrong even to the measure of a particle. And if it be a good deed, He multiplies it and gives a great reward out of His Own pleasure. [40]

How would it, then, be when We shall bring a witness from every community and shall bring you over them as a witness. [41] **On that Day, those who have disbelieved and disobeyed the Messenger shall wish that the earth be levelled with them. And they shall not conceal anything from Allah.** [42]

Previous verses carried the condemnation of those who refused to believe in Allah and in the *Ākhirah* and were miserly. The present verses persuade people to believe in Allah and the *Ākhirah* and engage in the gainful activity of spending in the way of Allah. Then, towards the end (41-42), a description of the trying situations prevailing on the plains of Resurrection appears to warn people, who refuse to believe and refuse to do what is good, of their evil end.

Commentary

In the first verse (39): وَمَاذَا عَلَيْهِمْ لَوْ اٰمَنُوْا بِاللّٰهِ, it is said: What conceivable harm could have affected them if they had believed in Allah and the Last Day and spent out of what Allah had given them? What is so tough, difficult or frightening about it? All these are as easy as they come. Going by them, taking to them and believing in them does not hurt or harm or cause any inconvenience. Why then, would someone elect to be disobedient, the certain outcome of which is nothing but disaster in the *Ākhirah*?

The text, then, says: اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يَظْلِمُ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ (40), that is, Allah Almighty does not allow the reward of good deeds from anyone be reduced in any manner or quantity whatsoever. In fact, He adds extra rewards, in multiples, in special Divine favours, and the life of *Ākhirah* will witness this supreme mercy of the Lord.

With Allah, the least human measure of *thawāb* or reward is that one good deed gets recorded as ten. Then, this does not stop at that; through sheer mercy and grace, Allah bestows manifold increase into this treasure of good deeds. Some *ḥadīth* narrations tell us that there

are deeds the reward for which rises as high as two million times. The truth of the matter is that Allah is *al-Karīm*, the most-noble, the most-generous - He Himself, in His limitless mercy and grace, so increases the quantum of his blessing on His servants that it simply cannot be counted or measured in our human terms. The extents of His generosity and the dimensions of His very Being are beyond human conceptualization - who can dare calculate the uncalculable?

Incidentally, the word, "ذَرَّة : *dharrah*" appearing in this verse has been translated here as 'particle' following the generally recognized meaning it carries. However, some commentators have pointed out that '*dharrah*' is the name of the smallest kind of red ant which the people of Arabia used to cite as an example of something very light and insignificantly small.

In the verse (41) beginning with: فَكَيْفَ إِذَا جِئْنَا مِنْ كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ , there is an invitation to visualize, in range and depth, the gravity of what will happen on the site of the Last Day. Also intended is an admonition to the disbelievers from the tribe of Quraysh. Their anxiety would know no bounds when every prophet of every community would appear as a witness to the good or bad deeds of his respective community on the Last Day - and Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وسلم too, the last of the prophets, will appear as a witness over his community - and he would give witness in the Divine Court particularly about such disbelievers and polytheists declaring that these people saw open signs and miracles, yet they belied and rejected them and ultimately refused to believe in 'The Divinity and my Prophethood'.

According to a narration in al-Bukhārī, the Holy Prophet ﷺ asked Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd رضى الله عنه to recite the Qur'ān to him. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh said: 'You want to hear it from me, although the Qur'ān was revealed to you?' He said: 'Yes. Recite.' Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd says: 'I started reciting Sūratun-Nisā' and when I reached the verse: فَكَيْفَ إِذَا جِئْنَا مِنْ كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ بِشَهِيدٍ (41), he said: "Enough for now;" and when I raised my eyes to look at him, I saw tears trickling from his blessed eyes.'

'Allāmā al-Qasṭalānī writes: This verse caused a full view of the *Ākhirah* to be present before his eyes and he thought about the people of his community who were short on or lacking in good deeds and that

was why tears started flowing from his eyes.

Special Note:

Some commentators have said that the word, هٰٓؤُلَآءِ (them), in this verse (41) points to the disbelievers and hypocrites present during the age of prophethood. Some others say that it refers to the entire community right through the Day of Doom. This is so because, as indicated in some *ḥadīth* narrations, the deeds of his community are being continuously presented before him. Nevertheless, from here we know that the prophets of past communities will appear as witnesses over their respective communities and that the Holy Prophet ﷺ too will testify to the deeds of his community. This textual style of the noble Qur'ān tells us that there is to be no prophet after him who could appear as a witness over a possible community of his - otherwise, the Qur'ān would have mentioned him and his community and the testimony he would give. Seen from this angle, this verse is a proof of the finality of prophethood as well.

In يَوْمَئِذٍ يَّوَدُّ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا, the text mentions the state of utter despair faced by disbelievers on the Last Day. That day they would wish to go extinct rather than face its ordeal, to become a patch of the earth underneath, or wish that the earth would crack open, suck them in leaving nothing on top but dust mingled with dust, so that they would be delivered of the scrutiny and retribution of that fateful time. (The statement: لَوْ تُسَوّٰى بِهِمُ الْاَرْضُ (42) has been translated here literally to express, in some measure at least, the power and poignancy of the original Qur'ānic expression, as: 'shall wish that the earth be levelled with them.)

The same wish appears in Suratun-Nisā' where it was said: وَيَقُوْلُ الْكٰفِرُ يٰلَيْتَنِيْ كُنْتُ تُرٰبًا. This will be on the plains of Resurrection when the disbelievers will see that all animals have been turned into dust after having exchanged the retribution of each other's excesses. They too, would pine for an end like this wishing to have become all dust.

Finally, the verse says: وَلَا يَكْتُمُوْنَ اللّٰهَ حَدِيْثًا (And they shall not conceal anything from Allah - 42). It means that these disbelievers will be unable to keep anything about their beliefs and deeds concealed from Allah. Their own hands and feet will confess. The prophets will testify and, of course, present there will be everything on record in their

Books of Deeds.

Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه was asked: "At one place, the Holy Qur'ān says: 'And they shall not conceal anything from Allāh' (4:42); while, at another place, it says: 'By Allah, Our Lord, we were no *mushriks'* (6:23) - Is there, as it seems, any contradiction between the two verses?" To this he replied: What will happen is that when the disbelievers will begin to see that nobody except true Muslims is being admitted into the Paradise they would decide to refuse point-blank that they had ever committed *shirk* or any other evil deed, in the hope that the plan works and results in their salvation. But, soon after this refusal of theirs, the very parts of their body would testify against them, which would totally frustrate their plan to conceal the truth about their deeds. That will be the time when they will confess everything. Hence: "They shall not conceal anything from Allah".

Verse 43

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَقْرَبُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَأَنتُمْ سُكَارَىٰ حَتَّىٰ
تَعْلَمُوا مَا تَقُولُونَ وَلَا جُنُبًا إِلَّا عَابِرِي سَبِيلٍ حَتَّىٰ تَغْتَسِلُوا ۚ
وَإِن كُنتُم مَّرْضَىٰ أَوْ عَلَىٰ سَفَرٍ أَوْ جَاءَ أَحَدٌ مِّنكُم مِّنَ الْغَائِطِ
أَوْ لَامَسْتُمُ النِّسَاءَ فَلَمْ تَجِدُوا مَاءً فَتَيَمَّمُوا صَعِيدًا طَيِّبًا
فَامْسَحُوا بِوُجُوهِكُمْ وَأَيْدِيكُمْ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَفُوًّا غَفُورًا ﴿٤٣﴾

O those who believe do not go near *Ṣalāh* when you are intoxicated until you know what you say, nor in a state of 'major impurity'[1] - save when you are traversing a way - until you take a bath. And if you are sick, or in travel, or one of you has come after easing himself, or you have touched women, and you find no water, go for some clean dust and wipe your faces and hands (with it). Surely, Allah is most-pardoning, most-forgiving. [43]

The Background of this Revelation

This is about an incident relating to Sayyidnā 'Alī رضى الله عنه which

1. Stands for *Janābah* which signifies a ritual impurity caused by sexual intercourse or seminal discharge, in passion or dream, after which it becomes obligatory to take a bath.

has been mentioned in Tirmidhī. It was before liquor was forbidden that Sayyidnā 'Abdul-Raḥmān ibn 'Awf رضی اللہ عنہ had invited some Companions for dinner at this home. As customary, liquor was served before dinner. When everybody had finished eating, time came for the Maghrib *ṣalāh*. Sayyidnā 'Alī رضی اللہ عنہ was asked to lead the prayer. He made a grave error while reciting the well-known Sūrah al-Kafirūn in the *ṣalāh* under the effect of intoxication. Thereupon, this verse was revealed in which warning was given that *ṣalāh* should not be performed in a state of intoxication.

Commentary

Commands prohibiting liquor came gradually

Allah Almighty has blessed the Sharī'ah of Islam with a particular distinction - its rules have been made easy. One such rule in this golden chain concerns drinking which was an old addiction in Arabia. This was a national habit, and pastime, involving everyone but a particular few who had a sort of God-given distaste and abhorrance for liquor all along. Naturally right-minded, they never went near this foul habit. One such example is that of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم. He never touched liquor even before he was called to prophethood. And everyone knows that habit, any habit, the urge and compulsion to have something, is really difficult to leave. This is all the more true about the habit of drinking or getting intoxicated by some other means. It so overpowers man in its clutches that he just cannot think otherwise. To him a farewell to drinking means a welcome to death.

Drinking has always been unlawful in the sight of Allah and when people entered the fold of Islam, saving Muslims from it was very much in order. But, had it been declared unlawful all of a sudden, people would have found obedience to this command extremely hard to carry out. So, the shift was gradual. First come partial prohibition. People were warned of the evil effects of drinking which aimed at motivating them to abandon the habit. As a result, the instruction initially given in this verse was limited to asking people not to go near *ṣalāh* while in a state of intoxication. The purpose here was to emphasize that *ṣalāh* is *farḍ*, an obligation - when the time for *ṣalāh* comes, one must rise, intend and offer it as due, and that one should not be drunk during *ṣalāh* timings. This approach helped Muslims realize

that drinking is really something bad for it stops them from performing *ṣalāh* properly. There were many blessed souls among them who made a spot decision to abandon the habit once and for all. There were others who started thinking seriously about its evils. Finally, when the verse of Sūrah al-Mā'idah carrying the absolute command which declared liquor as impure and unlawful was revealed, drinking was forbidden under all conditions.

Ruling: Based on the rule that performing *ṣalāh* in a state of intoxication is forbidden, according to some commentators, it is also not correct to perform *ṣalāh* when one feels so sleepy that one cannot control what one says. This restriction appears in a *hadīth* as follows:

اذا نعس احدكم فی الصلوۃ فليرقد حتی يذهب عنه النوم فانه لايدری لعله يستغفر فيسب نفسه (قرطبی)

'If one of you feels drowsy in *ṣalāh*, he should go to sleep for a little while so that the effect of sleep disappears, otherwise he would not know that, rather than seeking forgiveness (from Allah), he may (actually) be cursing himself.' (Qurṭubī)

Editor's Note[1]

Although the verse was initially revealed to prohibit offering *ṣalāh* in a state of intoxication, however, some other situations have also been dealt with in which offering *ṣalāh* is not permitted. These are the states of impurity which are of two kinds. The first kind is the state of 'major impurity' or '*janābah*' which is caused by sexual intercourse or by ejaculation with sexual desire by whatever means. This state of impurity has been referred to in the above verses by the word "جُنُبًا" which is derived from *janābah* and has been translated as 'major impurity'. In this state one cannot offer *ṣalāh* unless he purifies himself by having the prescribed bath (*ghusl*).

The second kind of impurity is called 'minor impurity' (الحدث الأصغر) which is caused by any act breaking the *wuḍū'*, like easing oneself or passing a flatus etc. In this state also one is not allowed to offer *ṣalāh*,

1. In the original book there was no explanation of other rules mentioned in the verse. The exteemed author has felt it sufficient that these rules are mentioned in the Urdu translation alongwith the خلاصہ تفسیر. For the benefit of English readers, I have added this note - Muhammad Taqi Usmani.

but the way of purifying oneself from this kind of impurity is much easier. Instead of having a bath one can release himself from it by making *wuḍū'* (prescribed ablution). In both situations it is necessary to use water, either for having a bath or for making *wuḍū'*. But there may be situations where the use of water is not possible due to its unavailability or is extremely difficult due to illness. In both these situations the above verses have provided an easier alternative for having a bath or making *wuḍū'*. The alternative is to strike the hands on a clean dust and then wipe the face and the wrists with it. This procedure is called '*Tayammum*' and has been taken by the Sharī'ah as a symbol of ritual purification where the actual act of purification through water is not possible or is extremely difficult. After making *tayammum* one is held to be purified for a temporary period until he is able to use water. The procedure of *tayammum*, being the same for both major and minor impurities, it has been prescribed in one sequence for both kinds. The words "أَوْ جَآءَ أَحَدٌ مِّنكُم مِّنَ الْغَآئِطِ" ('i.e. or one of you has come after easing himself') refer to the 'minor impurity' while the words "أَوْ لَـٰمَسْتُمُ النِّسَآءَ" (i.e. 'or you have touched women') stand for having sexual intercourse[1] causing major impurity. In both situations, it has been laid down that if someone is too sick to use water, or is on journey where he does not find water, he can have recourse to making *tayammum*.

The above discussion may explain the rules of impurities and their purification as laid down in the above verses. However, one point needs further elaboration:

While the Holy Qur'ān has prohibited to 'go near *ṣalāh*' in a state of major impurity the rule has been made subject to one exception which is expressed in the words إِلَّا عَابِرِي سَبِيلٍ (i.e. 'save when you are traversing a way'). This exception has been interpreted by the Muslim Jurists in different ways. According to the most commentators, including the Ḥanafī jurists, this exception refers to the state of travelling when water is not available. It, therefore, means that one cannot go near *ṣalāh* in a state of major impurity without having taken a ritual bath (*ghusl*), however, if he is 'traversing a way' in the sense that he is on

1. This explanation is based on the Ḥanafī view.

journey and does not find water, he can offer *salah* without taking bath after making *tayammum* as explained in the next sentence.

Conversely Imam al-Shafi'i interprets the exception in a totally different manner. He says that 'going near *salah*' means 'entering a mosque' and it is prohibited for a person to enter a mosque in a state of 'major impurity'. However, if he intends to go somewhere else, but passes through a mosque as a passer-by, he can do so. The Hanafi jurists do not accept this view. Based on the first interpretation, they say that the verse has no relevance with 'entering the mosque'. It refers to offering prayers, as is evident from the background in which it was revealed. The prohibition of entering a mosque in the state of impurity is based on some other sources, and it is not allowed, even for a passer-by, to enter a mosque with intention to go somewhere else. (Editor).

The rule of *Tayammum* is a blessing, and a distinction of the Muslim community

It is certainly a great favour granted by Allah Almighty that He, in His mercy, has made something else to take the place of water, something which is much more easily available than water. Obviously enough, land mass and dust are available everywhere. It appears in a *hadith* that this is a convenience bestowed upon the community of Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم exclusively. As for necessary rules governing the making of *Tayammum* (also referred to in English, and interestingly too, as the 'dry ablution'), these are commonly available in books on *salah*, (in English as well). Standard juristic works can be consulted for further details.

Verses 44 - 46

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا نَصِيبًا مِّنَ الْكِتَٰبِ يَشْتَرُونَ الضَّلَٰلَةَ
وَيُرِيدُونَ أَن تَضِلُّوا السَّبِيلَ ﴿٤٤﴾ وَاللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِأَعْدَائِكُمْ
وَكَفَىٰ بِاللَّهِ وَلِيًّا وَكَفَىٰ بِاللَّهِ نَصِيرًا ﴿٤٥﴾ مِّنَ الَّذِينَ هَادُوا
يُحَرِّفُونَ الْكَلِمَ عَن مَّوَاضِعِهِ وَيَقُولُونَ سَمِعْنَا وَعَصَيْنَا
وَاسْمَعْ غَيْرَ مُسْمَعٍ وَرَاعِنَا لَيًّا بِأَلْسِنَتِهِمْ وَطَعْنًا فِي الدِّينِ
وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ قَالُوا سَمِعْنَا وَأَطَعْنَا وَاسْمَعْ وَانظُرْنَا لَكَانَ خَيْرًا

لَّهُمْ وَأَقْوَمَ ۙ وَلَٰكِن لَّعَنَهُمُ ٱللَّهُ بِكُفْرِهِمْ فَلَا يُؤْمِنُونَ إِلَّا
قَلِيلًا ﴿٤٦﴾

Have you not seen those who have been given a share from the Book? They buy misguidance and want that you (too) lose the way. [44] **And Allah knows your enemies best. And Allah is enough as friend and Allah is enough as supporter.** [45] **Among the Jews there are some who move words away from their places and say, "We hear and disobey," and "Hear. May you not be made to hear," and "*Rā'inā*," twisting their tongues and maligning the Faith. And if they had said, "We hear and obey," and "Hear," and "Look after us," it would have been better for them, and more proper, but Allah has cast His curse on them due to their disbelief. So, they do not believe except a few.** [46]

In verses previous to this, the stress was on acting with *Taqwā* in mutual dealings. In between came some rules pertaining to *'Ibādah, Ṣalāh* and their corollaries since they instill man with fear of Allah, promote concern for the life-to-come and help in seeing that dealings come out right and smooth.

The present verses take up the matter of dealings with enemies. It brings into sharp focus the wicked tricks, in word and deed, as practiced by the Jews, and then gives a view of what is true and correct. This last aspect is in a way an exhortation to Muslims that they should be careful in choosing the words they use to say what they have to say, for mincing words is not their style.

Verse 47

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ أُوتُوا۟ ٱلْكِتَٰبَ ءَامِنُوا۟ بِمَا نَزَّلْنَا مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا مَعَكُم
مِّن قَبْلِ أَن نَّطْمِسَ وُجُوهًا فَنَرُدَّهَا عَلَىٰٓ أَدْبَارِهَآ أَوْ نَلْعَنَهُمْ
كَمَا لَعَنَّآ أَصْحَٰبَ ٱلسَّبْتِ ۚ وَكَانَ أَمْرُ ٱللَّهِ مَفْعُولًا ﴿٤٧﴾

O those who have been given the Book, believe in what We have revealed confirming what is with you before We rub off faces and turn them shaped like their backs, or curse them as We cursed the people of Sabbath. And what Allah wills is destined to occur. [47]

In the previous verse (46), there was a description of the Jewish stance against Islam which ranged from flat denial to laboured falsification, something born out of the desire to misrepresent, alter and ridicule. The present verse addresses them directly and commands them to believe in the final revelation and demonstrate their confirmation. Should they continue ignoring the warning and remain hostile, they should really be concerned with the chilling prospects of what their fate would be as a consequence of their ill choice.

Commentary

Note 1: The Qur'ānic expression: فَنَرُدَّهَا عَلٰٓى اَدْبَارِهَا (and turn them shaped like their backs) admits of two probabilities in this act of turning. It could either be that the features of the face are eliminated and the whole face is turned around towards the back; or, it may be that the face is flattened like the nape of the neck, devoid of all features, 'effaced.' (Maẓharī, Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī)

Note 2: When will this be is a question posed and answered by Commentators in great details. Discussing this deconfiguration (*ṭams*) and transmutation (*maskh*), some of them have said that this punishment will come upon the Jews before the Day of Doom, while others have said that this punishment did not come to pass because some of the Jews had entered the fold of Faith.

Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thanavī رحمه الله has said: 'In my opinion, that question simply does not arise because there is no single word in the Qur'ān which would suggest the proposition: If you do not believe, the punishment of *ṭams* and *maskh* will definitely materialize. In fact, it suggests probability, that is, given their crime, they do deserve this punishment, and should He spare them from the punishment, that would be His mercy.'

Verses 48 - 50

اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يَغْفِرُ اَنْ يُّشْرَكَ بِهٖ وَيَغْفِرُ مَا دُوْنَ ذٰلِكَ لِمَنْ يَّشَآءُ ۚ
وَمَنْ يُّشْرِكْ بِاللّٰهِ فَقَدِ افْتَرٰٓى اِثْمًا عَظِيْمًا ﴿٤٨﴾ اَلَمْ تَرَ اِلَى
الَّذِيْنَ يُزَكُّوْنَ اَنْفُسَهُمْ ۭ بَلِ اللّٰهُ يُزَكِّيْ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ وَلَا يُظْلَمُوْنَ
فَتِيْلًا ﴿٤٩﴾ اُنْظُرْ كَيْفَ يَفْتَرُوْنَ عَلَى اللّٰهِ الْكَذِبَ ۭ وَكَفٰى بِهٖٓ

اِثْمًا مُّبِيْنًا ﴿٥٠﴾

Surely, Allah does not forgive the ascribing of a partner to Him and forgives anything short of that for whomsoever He wills. And whoever ascribes a partner to Allah has tailored a great sin. [48]

Have you not seen those who claim sanctity for themselves? In fact, Allah sanctifies whom He wills and they shall not be wronged even to the measure of a thread of a date-stone. [49] **See how they fabricate a lie against Allah, and it is enough to be an open sin.** [50]

The previous verse carried an admonition for those who refused to believe. But, from among those to whom this admonition has been addressed, some could finally be forgiven, which admits of the probability that all these other addressees may, perhaps, be also forgiven. Therefore, the text goes on to explain that this group of people will not be forgiven because of their *kufr* or disbelief. This also refutes the Jewish claim that they shall be forgiven.

Commentary

Shirk: A definition, and some forms

The words of the Qur'anic text in اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يَغْفِرُ اَنْ يُّشْرَكَ بِهٖ (Surely, Allah does not forgive the ascribing of a partner to Him) demonstrate that the set articles of faith relating to the Being and Attributes of Allah Almighty are the *sine qua non* of religion and holding any belief similar to these in favour of whoever and whatever He has created is *shirk*. Some of the forms it takes are as follows:

***Shirk* in Knowledge:** This is the ascribing of a partner to Allah in matters of knowledge (*'ilm*), for example believing that a certain pious person or a spiritual master or the head of a mystical order knows about everything in this universe all the time. Other forms could be asking an astrologer or a fortune-teller or a diviner about things that are going to take place in a person's life, things which belong to the unseen world, an exclusive domain of Allah; or, to take omen (*fal*) from the words written by a pious person and believing that it has got to happen; or, calling someone from a considerable distance and believing that the person has become all aware of the call; or, keeping a fast dedicated to someone other than Allah.

***Shirk* in Power:** This is ascribing to others the powers and rights which are the exclusive domain of Allah as for example, taking someone to have the power and authority to provide gain or inflict loss. It includes things like asking someone to grant wishes or to ask for sustenance, and children.

***Shirk* in *'Ibādah*:** This means the ascribing of a partner to Allah in acts of worship (*'Ibādah*) which is the sole due of Allah. Some of the forms it could take are to go down in *sajdah* (prostration) for anyone, to release an animal dedicated in the name of somebody, making ceremonious offering for a person or thing, living or dead, to make a vow (*mannat, nadhr*) in someone's name; to make *ṭawāf* (rounds, circumambulation) of someone's grave or house; to give preference to someone else's word, or custom, as against God's own command; to make bows before anyone in the manner of a *rukū'*, the bowing position peculiar to Muslim prayer; to slaughter an animal in the name of someone; to take the affairs of the mortal world as subservient to the effect and influence of stars; to regard some month as ill-omened, wretched; and things like that.

Indulgence in self-praise

Let us now turn to the word of Allah in: أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ يُزَكُّونَ أَنفُسَهُم (Have you not seen those who claim sanctity for themselves?) Since the Jews claimed sanctity for themselves, Allah Almighty censures them in this verse as a strange lot attributing sanctity to themselves and then having the audacity to tell others that this is so. Amazing indeed!

From here we learn that it is not permissible for anyone to claim and broadcast his or her sanctity, or that of others. This is forbidden on three counts:

1. The cause of self-praise is mostly pride and arrogance. So, in reality, what is forbidden is pride and arrogance.

2. As to the end of man, only Allah knows if it will come in a state of *Taqwā* and *Ṭahārah*, that is, in a state when one is still God-fearing spiritually and free from major and minor impurities physically. Therefore, claiming sanctity for oneself is contrary to being God-fearing. As such, Sayyidah Zaynab daughter of Abī Salamah رضى الله عنها narrates that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم asked her: 'What is your name?' Since, at that time, her name was *Barrah* (which means pure

from sins), so, that was what she told him. He, then, said: لَا تُزَكُّوْا اَنْفُسَكُمْ، اَللّٰهُ اَعْلَمُ بِاَهْلِ الْبِرِّ مِنْكُمْ، سَمُّوْهَا زَيْنَبَ ، (رواه مسلم بحواله مشكوة) (Do not claim sanctity for yourselves (that is, do not claim purity and freedom from sins) because it is Allah alone who knows best as to who among you is of the righteous. He, then, named her Zaynab (instead of Barrah). (Maẓharī)

3. The third reason for this prohibition is that such a claim gives people the false idea that the person making that claim is nearer to Allah because he is free of all faults, although this is a lie, for no mortal man is free of one or the other shortcoming. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

Ruling: If impediments mentioned above do not exist, one can speak about one's trait of character as an expression of gratitude for Allah's blessing. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

Verses 51 - 52

اَلَمْ تَرَ اِلَى الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوْا نَصِيْبًا مِّنَ الْكِتٰبِ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِالْجِبْتِ وَالطَّاغُوْتِ وَيَقُوْلُوْنَ لِلَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا هٰۤؤُلَاۤءِ اَهْدٰى مِنَ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا سَبِيْلًا ﴿٥١﴾ اُولٰٓئِكَ الَّذِيْنَ لَعَنَهُمُ اللّٰهُ ۭ وَمَنْ يَّلْعَنِ اللّٰهُ فَلَنْ تَجِدَ لَهٗ نَصِيْرًا ﴿٥٢﴾

Have you not seen those who have been given a share from the Book? They believe in Jibt [1] and Ṭāghūt [2] and say concerning those who disbelieve, "They are better guided in their way than those who believe." [51] **Those are the ones whom Allah curses, and the one whom Allah curses you shall find no helper for him.** [52]

A description of the evil traits of Jews has been appearing from the previous verse beginning with: اَلَمْ تَرَ اِلَى الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوْا نَصِيْبًا مِّنَ الْكِتٰبِ يَشْتَرُوْنَ الضَّلٰلَةَ - الخ (44). The present verses also deal with the same subject.

Commentary

What is *Jibt* and *Ṭāghūt*?

Two words, 'al-Jibt' and 'al-Ṭāghūt' have been mentioned in the present verse (51). What do they mean? Commentators have explained

1. Jibt: Originally, the name of an idol which was also used later on for every false god as well as for sorcery.

2. Ṭāghūt: Literally signifies the arrogant. It is also used for Satan, and for evil and falsehood.

it variously. Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās, Ibn Jubayr and Abū al-'Āliyah رضی اللہ عنہم have said that '*Jibt*' comes from the Ethiopian language and refers to a magician while 'Ṭāghūt' signifies a soothsayer.

Sayyidnā 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ says that '*Jibt*' means magic and 'Ṭāghūt' means Satan. Sayyidnā Mālik ibn Anas رضی اللہ عنہ is reported to have said that everything worshipped other than Allah is covered by the name 'Ṭāghūt'.

Imām al-Qurṭubī says that the view of Sayyidnā Mālik ibn Anas رضی اللہ عنہ, being more inclusive, is generally preferred because it also has its support from the Holy Qur'ān where it is said: أَنِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَاجْتَنِبُوا الطَّاغُوتَ (Worship Allah and avoid Ṭāghūt.) (16:36) But, really, there is no contradiction as such in these different views. They all can be implied in one or the other sense, as Jibt was essentially the name of an idol after all, but it was later on that it came to be applied to other things and beings worshipped other than Allah. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī)

The present verses in the background of their revelation

Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ narrates that two chiefs of the Jews, Ḥuyayy ibn Akhṭab and Ka'b ibn Ashraf came along with a group of theirs, after the battle of Uḥud, to meet the Quraysh at Makkah. The Jewish Chief, Ka'b ibn Ashraf met Abū Sufyān and promised to collaborate with him in his fight against the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم. The people of Makkah told Ka'b ibn Ashraf that they were a people who cheated by making false promises. Then, they challenged them to prostrate before two particular idols (Jibt and Ṭāghūt) there, if they really meant what they had said.

So, in order to assure the Quraysh, he did exactly that. After that, Ka'b told the Quraysh: 'Let thirty people from among you and thirty people from among us come forward so that we declare our resolve before the Lord of the Ka'bah that all of us will jointly fight against Muḥammad صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم.

The Quraysh liked this proposal from Ka'b and this was how they opened a united front against Muslims. After that, Abū Sufyān told Ka'b: 'You are learned people. You have the Book of Allah with you. But, we are totally ignorant. Now, you let us know what do you think about us - tell us if we are on the right path, or is it Muḥammad? ﷺ

Ka'b asked: 'What is your religion?' Abū Sufyān said: 'We slaughter our camels for the Ḥajj. We offer their milk to pilgrims, and entertain guests. We maintain good relations with our kin. We make *ṭawāf* of the House of Allah and perform 'Umrah. Contrary to this, Muḥammad ﷺ has abandoned his ancestral religion and he has cut himself off from his own people and, on top of that, he has challenged our ancestral religion by introducing a new religion of his own.'

Hearing all this, Ka'b ibn Ashraf said: 'You people are on the right path. Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وسلم has gone astray.'

Thereupon, Allah Almighty revealed these verses and, thus, exposed their lying and deceit. (Ruḥ al-Ma'ānī)

The blind pursuit of material gains sometimes makes man surrender religion and faith

Ka'b ibn Ashraf was a distinguished scholar among the Jews. He believed in God and worshipped none but Him. However, when the ghost of overweening personal desires overpowered his mind and heart, he offered to join forces with the Quraysh against Muslims. As we already know, the Quraysh put forth the condition that he should prostrate before their idols. He swallowed this bitter pill to achieve his personal end. Here, we see that he squarely stooped to fulfil the condition imposed by the Quraysh, something contrary to his religion, but he made no effort to stand by his religious beliefs and did not show the courage to part ways with them on so crucial an issue. The Holy Qur'ān mentions a similar incident elsewhere concerning Bal'am ibn Bā'ūr. It says: وَاتْلُ عَلَيْهِمْ نَبَأَ الَّذِيْٓ اٰتَيْنٰهُ اٰيٰتِنَا فَانْسَلَخَ مِنْهَا فَاَتْبَعَهُ الشَّيْطٰنُ فَكَانَ مِنَ الْغٰوِيْنَ (Recite to them the news of the one who was given Our signs, then he eased out from it and followed the Satan, and he was one of those who seduce people to err.) (7:175)

Commentators say that Bal'am ibn Bā'ūr was a great scholar and a mendicant who wielded spiritual powers. But, when he launched his sinister plans against Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه الصلوة والسلام in an effort to achieve his personal desires, he was unable to achieve anything against him, but what did happen was that he himself ended up being accursed and went astray.

This tells us that religious knowledge as culled from a book is not

enough to guarantee the desired benefit. What is needed is action sought by the knowledge. This will not be possible unless one totally abstains from material greed and from the pursuit of carnal desires. Otherwise, man would not stay strong enough to resist against sacrificing something so dear as his religion on the altar of his desires. In our own time, we have the kind of people who would abandon their true creed just to achieve their material and political goals. Some of them would go for the extra effort to dress up their secular beliefs and views with the garb of Islam. Such people care less about the grave Covenant between God and man, nor do they worry much about what would happen to them in the *Ākhirah*. All this happens when one abandons his true and right creed and starts following the signals of the Satan.

The curse of Allah causes disgrace here and hereinafter

The Qur'ānic word, '*la'nah*' (translated as 'curse' in absence of a more exact equivalent) means being far removed from the mercy of Allah, extremely debased and disgraced. Anyone under '*la'nah*' from Allah cannot be close to Allah. For such accursed ones admonitions are very stern. The Holy Qur'ān says: مَلْعُوْنِيْنَ اَيْنَمَا ثُقِفُوْٓا اُخِذُوْا وَقُتِّلُوْا تَقْتِيْلًا (The accursed, wherever they be, are to be caught and killed massacre-like.) (33:61) This is their disgrace in the present life - the disgrace in the *Ākhirah* will be far too grim to contemplate.

Who deserves the '*la'nah*' of Allah?

The words of the Holy Qur'ān in verse 52: وَمَنْ يَّلْعَنِ اللّٰهُ فَلَنْ تَجِدَ لَهٗ نَصِيْرًا state that anyone under the curse of Allah has no helper to help him in that predicament. The point to ponder is: Who are these people who become deserving of this '*la'nah*' from Allah?

According to a ḥadīth, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has cursed the giver of interest, the receiver and the consumer of interest, and its writer and the one who bears witness to it, the whole lot of them, all of them equally involved in the sin. (Narrated by Muslim as in Mishkāt)

There is another hadīth in which he said: مَلْعُوْنٌ مَنْ عَمِلَ عَمَلَ قَوْمِ لُوْطٍ (Cursed is he who does what the people of Lūṭ عليه السلام used to do). Narrated by Razīn and appearing in Mishkāt, the reference is to the male homosexual. Then, he said: 'Allah sends his curse on the thief who would not stop from stealing even very small things like eggs and

ropes, and in retribution to which, his hand is cut off.' (Mishkāt)

In another ḥadīth, he said:

لَعَنَ اللّٰهُ اٰكِلَ الرِّبٰوا وَمُؤْكِلَهٗ وَالْوَاشِمَةَ وَالْمُسْتَوْشِمَةَ وَالْمُصَوِّرَ

> "Allah curses the eater of interest, and its feeder, and the woman who tattooes another woman and the woman who tattooes herself, and the picture-maker." (Bukhārī, from Mishkāt)

In yet another ḥadīth, he has said: 'Allah sends His curse on liquor, its consumer and its server, its seller and purchaser, its squeezers, its handlers, transporters and orderers, on all of them.' (Abu Dāwūd, ibn Mājah, from Mishkāt)

In still another ḥadīth, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم has said: 'There are six types of people I have cursed and Allah Almighty has also cursed them - and every prophet is blessed with the acceptance of his prayers - those six are:

(1) One who commits excess in the matter of Allah's Book;

(2) and one who rises to power by force and terror, then honours a person disgraced by Allah and brings disgrace on a person honoured by Allah;

(3) the denier of destiny determined by Allah;

(4) one who takes as lawful what has been made unlawful by Allah;

(5) the person in my progency who rules what has been forbidden as lawful;

(6) and the one who gives up my way (*sunnah*).' (Baihaqī in Al-Mudkhal from Mishkāt)

In another ḥadīth, he said: لَعَنَ اللّٰهُ النَّاظِرَ وَالْمَنْظُوْرَ اِلَيْهِ 'Allah curses the ogler and the ogled at.' It means that the curse of Allah falls on anyone who looks at someone in an evil way, someone who is a non-*Maḥram*, that is, someone outside the count of those in the family he is permitted to see because marriage with them is forbidden for ever. This is why such a *nāẓir*, the onlooker of the other, comes under the curse of Allah. As for the *manẓūr ilaihi*, the one who is looked at lustfully, the same curse will apply subject to his or her having deliberately and invitingly

caused such a look to be cast.

Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضی اللہ عنہ narrates:

لَعَنَ رَسُوْلُ اللّٰهِ صَلَّى اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ الرَّجُلَ يَلْبَسُ لِبسَةَ الْمَرْأَةِ، وَالْمَرْأَةَ تَلْبَسُ لِبسَةَ الرَّجُلِ

"The Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم has cursed the man who dresses like a woman and the woman who dresses like a man. (Mishkāt)

The following report from Abū Dāwūd appears in Mishkāt:

عن عائشة رضى الله تعالى عنها أن امراة تلبس النعل، قالت لعن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم الرجلة من النساء

"Someone told Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی اللہ عنہا about a woman who wore (men's) shoes. Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah said: 'The Messenger of Allah ﷺ has cursed the woman who takes to masculine ways.'

A narration from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ reports:

عن ابن عباس رضى الله عنهما قال: لعن النبى صلى الله عليه وسلم المخنثين من الرجال، والمترجلات من النساء و قال اخرجوهم من بيوتكم

(رواه البخارى بحواله مشكوة)

"The Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم has cursed the effeminate from among men (who, in dress and looks, emulate women-like transvestites) and he has cursed the masculinized from among women (who, in dress, looks and ways, act man-like). And he said: 'Expel them out of you homes.' " (Bukhārī, from Mishkāt)

Also from al-Bukhārī comes the report that Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd رضی اللہ عنہ said:

لعن الله الواشمات والمستوشمات والمتنمصات والمتفلجات للحسن المغيرات خلق الله

"The curse of Allah be on the tattooers and the tattooed, on the pickers of eye-brows and the cleavers of teeth as aids to beauty - they are the makers of alteration in the creation of Allah."

Rules about *La'nah*

La'nah is the denouncing of something or the calling down of evil on someone. 'Curse' is the most widely used equivalent for it. Two formal substitutes for 'curse' in this sense are 'execration' and 'imprecation'. 'Execration' is the face-to-face denunciation or the ill wished, while 'imprecation' is somewhat privately expressed. Call it by whatever name, the act of invoking '*La'nah*' is a terrible thing to do. Because of the amount of evil it releases, corresponding heavy restrictions have been placed against its use. Invoking *La'nah* against a Muslim is *ḥarām* (forbidden) and the sole condition when this can be done against a *kāfir* (disbeliever) is that the imprecator must be sure that the disbeliever will die clinging to his disbelief. Given below are some authentic sayings of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم on this subject:

عن ابن مسعود قال قال رسولُ الله صلى الله عليه وسلم ليس المؤمن بالطّعّان ولا باللعان ولا البذى (الترمذى بحواله مشكوة)

"According to Sayyidnā Ibn Mas'ūd رضى الله عنه, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: 'A true Muslim is no taunter or imprecator, nor is he foul-mouthed.'" (Tirmidhī, from Mishkāt)

عن ابى الدرداء قال سمعت رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم يقول: إنّ العبد إذا لعن شيئًا صعدت اللّعنة إلى السماء فتغلق ابواب السماء دونها، ثمّ تهبط الى الارض فتغلق ابوابها دونها، ثم تاخذ يمينًا وشمالاً، فاذا لم تجد مساغًا رجعت الى الّذى لعن فان كان لذلك اهلاً والا رجعت الى قائلها (رواه ابو داؤد بحواله مشكوة)

"Sayyidnā Abū al-Dardā' رضى الله عنه says that he heard the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم say : 'When a servant of Allah curses something, the curse goes up towards the sky whereupon the doors of the sky are closed on it. After that, it comes down towards the earth whereupon the doors of the earth are closed on it (that is, the earth does not accept this curse). After that, it takes a right, and then a left, but, as it finds no access anywhere, it returns to the one who was cursed. So, if he is really deserving of it, on him it falls; otherwise, it returns back to its pronouncer and falls on him." (Abū Dāwūd, cited by Mishkāt)

عن ابن عباس ان رجلا نازعته الريح رداءه فلعنها فقال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: لا تلعنها فانها مامورة، وانه من لعن شيئا ليس له باهل رجعت اللعنة عليه . (رواه الترمذى بحواله مشكوة)

"It has been reported by Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه that the wind swooped away the sheet-cloak of a man and he cursed the wind, whereupon the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: 'Do not curse it for it is under orders (from Allah) and (remember) whosoever curses something which does not deserve the curse, then, the curse returns to none but him." (Tirmidhī, cited by Mishkāt, p. 413)

Rulings:

1. Unless it is known about a particular person that he has died in a state of *kufr* (disbelief), invoking *La'nah* on him is not permissible - even though he may be a sinful person. Based on this principle, Allāmah Ibn 'Ābidīn has advised against cursing Yazīd. But, should it be on a particular *kāfir* whose death in a state of disbelief is certain, for instance, Abū Jahl and Abū Lahab, then, it is permissible. (Shāmī, v.2, p.836)

2. Cursing without naming anyone is permissible, for example, saying: 'God's curse upon liars (or tyrants)! '

3. Literally, *La'nah* means being far removed from the mercy of Allah. In the terminology of the Sharī'ah, when applied to disbelievers, it refers to their being far far off from the mercy of Allah; and when it is applied to Muslims, it refers to their having fallen down the level of the righteous (reported by Shāmī from al-Quhistānī, v.2, p.836). Therefore, praying that the good deeds of a Muslim may decrease is also not permissible.

Verses 53 - 55

أَمْ لَهُمْ نَصِيبٌ مِّنَ الْمُلْكِ فَإِذًا لَّا يُؤْتُونَ النَّاسَ نَقِيرًا ﴿٥٣﴾ أَمْ
يَحْسُدُونَ النَّاسَ عَلَىٰ مَا آتَاهُمُ اللَّهُ مِن فَضْلِهِ ۖ فَقَدْ آتَيْنَا آلَ
إِبْرَاهِيمَ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَآتَيْنَاهُم مُّلْكًا عَظِيمًا ﴿٥٤﴾ فَمِنْهُم
مَّنْ آمَنَ بِهِ وَمِنْهُم مَّن صَدَّ عَنْهُ ۚ وَكَفَىٰ بِجَهَنَّمَ سَعِيرًا ﴿٥٥﴾

Is it that they have a share in the kingdom, while in that case, they would give nothing to the people, not

even to the measure of a tiny pit on the back of a date-stone? [53]

Or, is it that they are jealous of people over what Allah has given them of His bounty while We have given to the House of Ibrāhīm the Book and the wisdom and We have given to them a great kingdom? [54]

So, there were some among them who believed in it and there were others among them who turned away from it. And enough (for the latter) is *Jahannam*, a fire ablaze! [55]

Linked with previous verses, the description of Jewish traits of character continues in the present verses as well.

Commentary

Admonishing Jews for being unreasonably envious

The knowledge, the grace, the high rank and the grandeur of mission given by Allah Almighty to the Noble Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم made Jews all too jealous. Verses 53 and 54 strongly admonish this attitude of theirs, giving two reasons why their envy was unreasonable. The first reason appears in verse 53, while the second, in verse 54. But, the outcome of both is the same. The drift of the argument is: 'What is the basis of your envy? If this is because you think you are the real inheritors of the kingdom and what he has been blessed with is actually yours, obviously then, this is all wrong. As it is, right now you have no kingdom. Even if you came to have some of it, you are not the kind to give anything to anybody. If your envy is based on the realization that the kingdom, no doubt, did not pass from you onto him, still, the question remains, why did it have to go to him at all. What relevance does he have with having a kingdom? The answer given was: He too comes from the family of prophets who have ruled over kingdoms before him. So, the kingdom has really not come to a stranger. Your envy, therefore, is unreasonable.'

The definition and rules of envy

'Allāmah al-Nawawī, the Commentator of Muslim, defines *Ḥasad* as : اَلْحَسَدُ تَمَنِّيْ زَوَالِ النِّعْمَةِ (Muslim, v.2). It means that *Ḥasad* (envy) is a desire to see the other person's blessing somehow disappear, and this is ḥarām (forbidden).

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said:

لا تباغضوا ولا تحاسدوا ولا تدابروا، وكونوا عباد الله اخوانًا، ولا يحل لمسلم ان يهجر اخاه فوق ثلاث .

"Do not hate and do not envy and do not turn your backs on each other. Instead, become servants of Allah, as brothers. And it is not lawful for a Muslim that he abandons his brother for more than three days." (Muslim, v.2)

In another ḥadīth, he has said:

اياكم والحسد، فإن الحسد يأكل الحسنات كما تاكل النار الحطب

"Beware of envy, for envy eats up good deeds as the fire eats up wood." (Abū Dāwūd, cited by Mishkāt)

Sayyidnā Zubayr رضى الله عنه narrates that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said:

عن الزبير رضى الله عنه قال: قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم : دب اليكم داء الامم قبلكم، الحسد والبغضاء هى الحالقة، لا أقول تحلق الشعر، ولكن تحلق الدين

"Stealthily creeping into you is the disease of earlier peoples - envy; and hatred, which is a shaver. I do not say that it shaves hair, but it does shave the religion off." (Aḥmad and Tirmidhī, cited by Mishkāt)

Envy, whether it be on account of someone's worldly, or spiritual excellence, is ḥarām (forbidden) on both counts, as the words أَمْ لَهُمْ نَصِيبٌ مِّنَ الْمُلْكِ (Is it that they have a share in the kingdom?) seem to point out towards worldly excellence, while the words الْكِتٰبَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ (54) (the Book and the wisdom) are indicative of spiritual excellence.

Verses 56 - 57

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِاٰيٰتِنَا سَوْفَ نُصْلِيهِمْ نَارًا ۖ كُلَّمَا نَضِجَتْ جُلُودُهُمْ بَدَّلْنٰهُمْ جُلُودًا غَيْرَهَا لِيَذُوقُوا الْعَذَابَ ۗ إِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ عَزِيزًا حَكِيمًا ﴿٥٦﴾ وَالَّذِينَ اٰمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ سَنُدْخِلُهُمْ جَنّٰتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهٰرُ خٰلِدِينَ فِيهَآ أَبَدًا ۖ لَهُمْ فِيهَآ أَزْوٰجٌ مُّطَهَّرَةٌ ۖ وَّنُدْخِلُهُمْ ظِلًّا ظَلِيلًا ﴿٥٧﴾

Those who have disbelieved in Our verses, We shall certainly make them enter a fire. Whenever their skins are burnt out, We shall give them other skins in their place, so that they may taste the punishment. Surely, Allah is All-Mighty, All-Wise. [56]

As for those who have believed and have done good deeds, We shall admit them to gardens beneath which rivers flow, remaining there for ever, for them, there are wives purified. And We shall admit them to a shade ever-stretched. [57]

Particular believers and disbelievers were mentioned in the previous verses. Stated now is the reward and punishment of a believer and a disbeliever as a universal rule.

Commentary

Explaining the highly apocalyptic statement كُلَّمَا نَضِجَتْ جُلُودُهُمْ بَدَّلْنٰهُمْ in verse 56, Sayyidnā Mu'ādh رضی اللہ عنہ says that as soon as their skin is burnt out it will be replaced - and this will be with such speed that the skin will be replaced a hundred times in one moment.

Sayyidnā Ḥasan al-Baṣrī says:

تاكل النّار كلّ يوم سبعين الف مرة، كلما اكلتهم قيل لهم: عودوا فيعودون كما كانوا (اخرج البيهقى عن الحسن بحوالة مظهرى ج ٢)

"The fire will eat them everyday seventy thousand times. When it would have eaten them up, they will be commanded: 'Return'. So, they shall return to be as they were." (al-Baihaqi, as quoted by Maẓharī)

According to a narration in al-Bukhārī and Muslim, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said:

عن النبى صلى الله عليه وسلم قال: ان اهون اهل النار عذابا رجل فى اخمص قدميه جمرتان يغلى منهما دماغه كما يغلى الرجل بالقمقم (رواه البخارى و مسلم، بحواله الترغيب والترهيب ج ٤ ص ٢٣٩)

"Lightest in punishment among the people of fire will be the man in the sole of whose feet there will be two smouldering embers the heat from which will keep his brain boiling like a cauldron boiling to the brim." (Almundhiri, al-Targhib v.4, p.239)

An explanation of 'purified wives'

According to Ḥākim, Sayyidnā Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī رضی اللہ عنہ narrated that the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said: The women of *Jannah* will be pure, that is, pure from menstruation, defecation, urination and nasal mucus.

Mujāhid adds to the above by saying: 'They shall also be pure and free from procreation and seminal impurity.' (Maẓharī)

Let us now look at the last two words: ظِلًّا ظَلِيْلًا in verse 57. Here, by mentioning ظليل after ظل it has been mentioned that the shade in Jannah will be dense and ever-present. This is like saying: شَمْسٌ شَامِسٌ or لَيْلٌ لَيْلٌ which indicate that the blessings of Paradise will last for ever.

Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضی اللہ عنہ narrates that the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said:

ان فی الجنۃ لشجرۃ یسیر الراکب فی ظلھا مأۃ عام مایقطعھا، اقروا إن شئتم و ظل ممدود

"There is a tree in Paradise. If a rider were to ride under its shade for a hundred years, he will still not cross it. Read, if you wish, وَظِلٍّ مَّمْدُوْدٍ (A shade, ever-extended, ever-stretched)."

Explaining ظِلًّا ظَلِيْلًا, Rabī' ibn Anas said:

ھوظل العرش الذی لایزول

"That is the shade of the Throne (*al-'arsh*) which will never decline."

Verses 58 - 59

اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَاْمُرُكُمْ اَنْ تُؤَدُّوا الْاَمٰنٰتِ اِلٰٓى اَهْلِهَا ۙ وَاِذَا حَكَمْتُمْ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ اَنْ تَحْكُمُوْا بِالْعَدْلِ ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ نِعِمَّا يَعِظُكُمْ بِهٖ ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ سَمِيْعًا ۢ بَصِيْرًا ﴿۵۸﴾ يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اَطِيْعُوا اللّٰهَ وَاَطِيْعُوا الرَّسُوْلَ وَاُولِي الْاَمْرِ مِنْكُمْ ۚ فَاِنْ تَنَازَعْتُمْ فِيْ شَيْءٍ فَرُدُّوْهُ اِلَى اللّٰهِ وَالرَّسُوْلِ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ ۭ ذٰلِكَ خَيْرٌ وَّاَحْسَنُ تَاْوِيْلًا ﴿۵۹﴾

Surely, Allah commands you to fulfil trust obligations

towards those entitled to them and that, when you judge between people, judge with fairness. Surely, good is what Allah exhorts you with. Surely, Allah is All-Hearing, All-Seeing. [58]

O those who believe, obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you. Then, if you quarrel about something, revert it back to Allah and the Messenger, if you believe in Allah and the Last Day. That is good, and the best at the end. [59]

Commentary

The background of the revelation of these verses

The first of the two verses cited above was revealed in the background of a particular event which related to the custodial service of the Ka'bah, an office of great honour even before the advent of Islam. Those who were appointed to serve the House of Allah in a particular area of responsibility were regarded as people of great prestige and distinction in the community. Therefore, different areas of services were distributed over different people. It was from the time of Jāhilliyah that, during the days of Ḥajj, the service of providing drinking water to pilgrims from the well of Zamzam was entrusted to Sayyidnā 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ, the revered uncle of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. This was known as Siqāyah. Some other services similar to this were in the charge of Abū Ṭālib, another uncle of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Likewise, the custodial duty of keeping the keys to the House of Allah and of opening and closing it during fixed days had been given to 'Uthmān ibn Ṭalḥah.

According to a personal statement of 'Uthmān ibn Ṭalḥah, the Ka'bah was opened every Monday and Thursday during the period of Jāhilliyah and people would use the occasion to have the honour of entering the sacred House. Once before Hijrah, the Holy Prophet ﷺ came with some of his Companions in order to enter the Ka'bah. 'Uthmān ibn Ṭalḥah had not embraced Islām until that time. He stopped the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم from going in, displaying an attitude which was very rude. The Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم showed great restraint, tolerated his harsh words, then said: 'O 'Uthmān, a day will come when you would perhaps see this key to the Baytullāh in my hands when I shall have the power and choice to give it to anyone I

choose.' 'Uthmān ibn Ṭalḥah said: 'If this happens, the Quraysh will then be all uprooted and disgraced.' He said: 'No, the Quraysh will then be all established and very honourable indeed.' Saying this, he went into the Baytullāh. After that, says Ṭalḥah, when I did a little soul-searching, I became convinced that whatever he has said is bound to happen. I made up my mind that I am going to embrace Islam then and there. But, my own people around me vehemently opposed the idea and everybody joined in to chide me on my decision. So, I was unable to convert to Islam. When came the conquest of Makkah, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم called for me and asked for the key to Baytullāh, which I presented to him.'

In some narrations, it is said that 'Uthmān ibn Ṭalḥah had climbed over the Baytullāh with the key. It was Sayyidnā 'Alī رضى الله عنه who, in deference to the order of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم , had forcibly taken the key from his hand and had given it to the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

So he went into the Baytullāh, offered his prayers there, and when he came out, he returned the key to Ṭalḥah saying: 'Here, take it. Now this key will always remain with your family right through the Last Day. Anyone who will take this key from you will be a tyrant.' (By this he meant that nobody has the right to take back this key from Ṭalḥah) He also instructed him to use whatever money or things he may get in return for this service to Baytullāh in accordance with the rules set by the Sharī'ah of Islam.

'Uthmān ibn Ṭalḥah says: 'When I, with the key in my hand, started walking off all delighted, he called me again, and said: 'Remember 'Uthmān, did I not tell you something way back? Has it come to pass, or has it not?' Now, I remembered what he had said before Hijrah when he had said: 'A day will come when you will see this key in my hand.' I submitted: 'Yes, there is no doubt about it. Your word has come true.' And that was the time when I recited the *Kalimah* and entered the fold of Islam.' (Maẓharī, from Ibn Sa'd).

Sayyidnā 'Umar ibn Al-Khaṭṭāb رضى الله عنه says: 'That day, when the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم came out of the Baytullāh, he was reciting this very verse, that is, إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُكُمْ أَنْ تُؤَدُّوا الْأَمَانَاتِ إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهَا (58). I had never heard him recite this verse before this.' Obviously, this verse was revealed to him inside the Ka'bah exactly at that time. Obeying the Divine

command in the verse, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم called 'Uthmān ibn Ṭalḥah again and made him the trustee of the key, because 'Uthmān ibn Ṭalḥah when he had given the key to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم , had said: 'I hand over this article of trust to you.' Although, the remark he made was not technically correct as it was the sole right of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم to take whatever course of action he deemed fit. But, the Holy Qur'ān has, in this verse, taken into consideration the nature of trust involved therein, and directed the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم to return the key to none else but 'Uthmān, although, that was a time when Sayyidnā 'Abbās and Sayyidnā 'Alī رضى الله عنهم had both requested that, since Baytullāh's offices of water supply and custodial services (Siqāya and Sidāna) were in their respective charge, this service of the Key-Bearer of the Ka'bah may be entrusted to them. But, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم preferred to follow the instruction given in this verse, bypassed their request and returned the key to 'Uthmān ibn Ṭalḥah. (Tafsīr Maẓharī)

This was the background in which this verse was revealed. At this point let us bear in mind an important rule on which there is a consensus. The rule is that even if a Qur'anic verse is revealed in a particular background, the rule laid down by it in general terms must be taken as of universal application and must not be restricted to that particular event.

Now, we can turn to the meanings and exegetic aspects of these verses.

The Holy Qur'ān says: إِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَأْمُرُكُمْ أَنْ تُؤَدُّوا الْأَمٰنٰتِ إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهَا . It means: 'Surely, Allah commands you to fulfill trust obligations towards those entitled to them.' As to who is the addressee of this command, there are two probabilities: It could have been addressed to the general body of Muslims, or it could have been addressed particularly to those in authority. What is more obvious here is that the verse is addressed to everyone who holds anything in trust. This includes the masses and also those in authority.

The emphasis laid on fulfilling trust obligations

The functional outcome of the command in the verse is that everyone who holds anything in trust with him is duty-bound to see that trust obligations are faithfully fulfilled and that the rightful

recipients have in their hands what is their due. The Holy Prophet ﷺ has laid great stress on the fulfillment of trust obligations. Sayyidnā Anas رضی اللہ عنہ says: 'It must have been a rare sermon indeed in which the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم may not have said the following words:

لَا إِيْمَانَ لِمَنْ لَا أَمَانَةَ لَهُ، وَلَا دِيْنَ لِمَنْ لَا عَهْدَ لَهُ

"One who does not fulfill trust obligations has no Faith (*'Īmān*) with him; and one who does not stand by his word of promise has no religion (*Dīn*) with him." (Reported by al-Baihaqī in Shu'ab al-'Īmān)

Breach of Trust is a Sign of Hypocricy

According to narrations from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah and Sayyidnā Ibn 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہم appearing in al-Bukhārī and Muslim, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم , while describing the signs of hypocricy on a certain day, pointed out to a particular sign which was: 'Give him an *amānah* and he will do *khiyānah*.' It means when an hypocrite is charged with a trust obligation, he will commit a breach of trust.

Kinds of trust obligations

Here, worth pondering is the Qur'ānic use of the word, Amānāt which is in the plural form. This is to hint that *amānah* (trust obligation) is not simply limited to cash or kind which someone may have entrusted to someone else for safe-keeping until demanded, which is the most prevailing and commonly understood form of *amānah*. The cue is that there are other kinds of *amānah* as well. For example, the incident mentioned earlier under the background of the revelation of this verse does not have any financial aspect to it. The key to the Baytullāh was not a financial asset. Instead, this key was a symbol of the office of the serving keeper of the Baytullāh.

The offices of authority and government are trusts from Allah

This tells us that offices and ranks of government, whatever they may be, are all handed over to the recipients as trust from Allah. Those who receive it are its *amīn* (trustees). This covers all officials and everyone else in authority who wield the powers of appointments and dismissals. For them, it is not permissible that they give any office or job or responsibility to anyone who is not deserving of it in terms of his relevant practical expertise or intellectual capability. Instead of doing that, it is incumbent on those in authority that they must make

a serious search for the most deserving person for every job, every office within the jurisdiction of the government.

Cursed is he who appoints somebody undeserving to any office

In case, it is not possible to find the most perfect person for an office, someone with the most desirable qualifications and capabilities, someone who combines in himself all required conditions, then, preference may be given to the one who is superior-most in terms of his capabilities and trustworthiness from among the many of those available.

In a ḥadīth, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم has been reported to have said: If a person, who has been charged with some responsibility relating to the general body of Muslims, gives an office to someone simply on the basis of friendship or connection of some sort, without finding out the capability or merit of the person concerned, the curse of Allah falls on him. Not accepted from him is any act of worship which he has been obligated with (*farḍ*) nor any of that which he offers voluntarily (*nafl*), all along till the time he enters the Hell. (Jam'ul-Fawā'id, p. 325)

In some narrations it is reported that whoever entrusts a person with an office of responsibility, although he knows that there is another person more suited and more deserving for that office, then, he has committed a breach of trust against Allah, against His Messenger and against all Muslims.

The chaos and corruption seen in many systems of governance these days is a sad consequence of ignoring this Qur'ānic teaching, as offices are distributed on the basis of connections, recommendations and bribes. The result is that undeserving and unmerited people usurp offices they are not fit to occupy, doing nothing but harassing millions of God's own people, and in the process, destroying the very edifice of the system.

Therefore, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said:

اذا وسد الامر الى غير اهله فانتظر الساعة

"When the responsibility of affairs is placed under the charge of those who are not deserving of and fit for it, then, wait for the Day of Doom (that is, there is no solution for this chaos)."

This instruction appears in a ḥadīth from Kitāb al-'Ilm of Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī.

To recapitulate, let us remember that the Holy Qur'ān uses the plural form for trust obligations, that is, *'Amānāt'*, and thus gives the hint that trust obligations do not simply relate to property or other financial assets held in trust by one person on behalf of the other. Instead of that , it has many kinds, included wherein are offices of the government.

There is a ḥadīth where the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم has said: اَلْمَجَالِسُ بِالْاَمَانَةِ (Meetings are a kind of trust). It means that anything said in a meeting is a matter of trust restricted to it. Reporting and publicizing what transpired there without the permission of participants is not permissible.

Similarly, another ḥadīth says: اَلْمُسْتَشَارُ مُؤْتَمَنٌ It means: 'The consultant is a trustee.' It is incumbent on him that the counsel he gives must be, in his best judgement, most beneficial for the seekers of the advice. If he gives an advice which he knows is not in the best interest of the seeker of the advice, he has committed a breach of trust right there. Similarly, if someone confides you with his secret, it becomes an article of trust kept on his behalf. Disclosing it to anyone without his permission is a breach of trust. So, the present verse tells us to be very particular in fulfilling all such trust obligations as due.

It was just the explanation of the first sentence of the first verse which has brought us this far. Now, we proceed with the explanation of the second sentence of the first verse (58) which reads: وَاِذَا حَكَمْتُمْ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ اَنْ تَحْكُمُوْا بِالْعَدْلِ (when you judge between people, judge with fairness). What is obvious here is that the mode of address in the verse refers to those in authority who decide cases of dispute. Taking their cue from here, some commentators have concluded that the addressee in the first sentence is the same as in the second, that is, those in authority. This does not take into consideration the leeway that exists here too, very much like it is in the first sentence, that is, the probability exists that both office-holders and masses are included in this address for the simple reason that among the common people at large the usual practice is to appoint a neutral arbitrator to judge and decide between disputing parties. However, there is no doubt that, at the first sight,

the addressees of both these sentences appear to be none but those in authority. Therefore, it can be said that their addressees are, primarily, those in authority; while, secondarily, this address is also directed at all those who are keepers of trusts, and who have been appointed to arbitrate in some case.

It should be noted that Allah Almighty has said: بَيْنَ النَّاسِ that is, "between people"; and not anything like, 'between Muslims' or 'between believers.' Thus, the hint given is that all human beings are equal in the sight of the decider of cases in dispute. They may be Muslims or non-Muslims, friends or enemies, or they may belong to the same country, colour, language, or may be from another country, differ in colour and speak a different language. Those who have been made responsible to judge between them are duty-bound to cast aside all these connections and give their decision guided by whatever be the dictate of truth, right and just.

Equity and justice guarantee world peace

In a nutshell, it can be said that the first sentence of this verse carries the command to fulfill trust obligations, while equity and justice have been enjoined in the second. Between the two, the fulfilment of trust obligations has been given precedence. Perhaps, the reason for this may be that the establishment of a system that guarantees equity and justice all over a country is just not possible without it. It means that those who hold power in a country must, first of all, fulfill their trust obligations, a bounden duty which has to be discharged correctly and properly. Consequently they must appoint only those to the offices of the government who prove to be the best of the lot in terms of their ability to perform the required job and in terms of their trustworthiness and honesty. In this matter, no backdoors should be opened by acting on the basis of friendship, relationships, connections, recommendations and bribes. If this is not done, the result will be that gangs of the undeserving, and the incapable, or hosts of usurpers and tyrants will take over all offices and entrench themselves. When this happens, those at the highest level of power and authority cannot, even if they genuinely wish to usher an era of equity and justice in the country, do anything about it. The whole thing will just become impossible because these very officials of the

government are supposed to be the functionaries of the government through which it acts. When these officials turn pilferers of the trust or are flatly incapable of performing the duty entrusted to them, how can equity and justice be installed in a system?

Specially worth-remembering in this verse is that Allah Almighty has, by equating offices of the government with the trust obligations, made it clear at the very outset that *amānah* or whatever is held in trust should be handed over, properly and duly, to the person who is its rightful owner. It is not permissible to dole out what is held in trust to some beggar or someone needy just out of pity or mercy; or, it is also not correct to give out something held in trust just to fulfill the rights of some relative or friend. This is about *amānah* as it relates to common trust holdings. Not too different from this are trust obligations seen in broader perspective. Very similar are the offices of the government on which hinges a whole roster of things that have to be done in the best interests of the masses of men and women created by Allah Almighty. These too are trusts. They too have to be returned. But, they must be handed over to those who are its rightful, deserving recipients, those who have the ability to do what is required of them, have the qualification, the capability, and are clearly the best of those suitable and available for this office, and finally, are clearly superior to those in line in terms of their honesty and trustworthiness. If this office is given to anyone else other than these, this will be deemed as a contravention of the Divine instruction, that is, the trust obligations will not have been fulfilled as is their due.

Giving offices of government on the basis of regional or provincial considerations is an error of principle

Furthermore, this sentence of the Wise Qur'ān has removed the common error which has be adopted as a rule of law in many countries and constitutions of the world whereby the offices of the government have been declared as the right of the people of a country. Because of this error of principle, laws had to be enacted to guarantee the distribution of government offices on the basis of the ratio of the population. As such, every province or state of a country has fixed quotas. A person from another province or state cannot be appointed on the quota of one province, no matter how deserving and trustworthy he

may be and no matter how undeserving and evil-doing the man from the latter may be. The Qur'ān has openly proclaimed that these offices are not rights to be claimed by somebody. Instead, they are trusts which can be given only to those who deserve it. They may belong to one province or the other, one zone or the other. However, there is nothing wrong in preferring to appoint a person belonging to the area where the government has to have an office. Actually, there may be many beneficial considerations behind it, but, the condition is that the essential ability and trustworthiness of the incumbent must be checked and found satisfactory before such an appointment.

State structure and some golden principles

So, from within the framework of this brief verse, some basic principles emerge. These are:

1. By beginning the first sentence of the verse with إِنَّ اللهَ يَأْمُرُكُمْ (Surely, Allah commands you ...), it has been clearly indicated that the real command and rule is from Allah Almighty. All rulers of the mortal world are the carriers of His command. This establishes that the supreme authority, the ultimate sovereignty belongs to none but Allah Almighty.

2. The offices of the government are not the rights of the residents of a country which could be distributed on the basis of the ratio of population. They are, trust obligations placed on our shoulders by Allah Almighty which can be given only to those who are capable and deserving of them.

3. Man's rule on this earth can be legitimate only as a deputy or trustee. While formulating the laws of the land, he will have to be bound and guided by the principles laid down by Allah Almighty, the Absolute Sovereign, and which have been given to man through revelation.

4. It is the standing duty of those in authority that they should, whenever a case comes to them, give a judgement based on equity and justice without making any discrimination on the basis of race, country of origin, colour, language, even religion and creed.

After having enunciated these golden principles of state structure, it has been said towards the end of the verse that the counsel thus

given to man is good counsel, good as it can be, because Allah hears everyone. He observes the state of a person who does not have the ability to speak, not even the power or means to protest. Therefore, the principles made and given by Him are such as will be practice-worthy in every country, every age, always. Principles and orders made by human minds are restricted within the parameters of their environment. They have to be inevitably changed when circumstances change. So, the way those in authority were the addressees in the first verse (58), people at large have been addressed in the second verse (59) by: 'O those who believe, obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you.'

'Those in Authority':

Lexically, أُولِي الْأَمْرِ (*uli'l-amr:*) (translated here as 'those in authority') refers to those in whose hands lies the management and administration of something. Therefore, Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās, Mujāhid and Ḥasan al-Baṣrī the earliest commentators of the Qur'ān, may Allah be pleased with them, have said that *uli'l-amr* fittingly applies to scholars and jurists (*'Ulamā'* and *Fuqahā'*) since they are the succeeding deputies of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and the proper regulation of religion is in their hands.

Then, there is a group of commentators, including Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضى الله عنه , which says that *uli'l-amr* signifies officials and rulers who hold the reins of government in their hands.

However, it appears in Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr and al-Tafsīr al-Maẓharī that this expression includes both categories, that is, the scholars and jurists as well as the officials and rulers because the system of command is inevitably connected with these two.

A surface view of this verse shows three 'obediences' being commanded here - of Allah, the Messenger and those in authority. But, other verses of the Holy Qur'ān have made it very clear that command and obedience really belong to none but Allah - from Him the command and to Him the obedience. The Qur'ān says: إِنِ الْحُكْمُ إِلَّا لِلَّهِ " 'The command belongs to none but Allah.' But, the practical form of the obedience to His command is divided over four parts.

Forms of obedience to Allah's commands

1. First of all come commands about something which Allah Almighty has Himself revealed very explicitly in the Holy Qur'ān and which do not need any explanation - for example, the extremely serious crime of *shirk* and *kufr* (the ascribing of partners to the divinity of Allah, and disbelief); the worship of Allah, the One; the belief in *Ākhirah*, the life-to-come, and in Qiyāmah, the Last Day; and the belief in Sayyidnā Muḥammd al-Muṣṭafā صلى الله عليه وسلم as the Last and True Messenger of Allah; the belief in and the practice of *Ṣalāh* (prayers), *Ṣawm* (fasting), Ḥajj (pilgrimage) and *Zakāh* (alms) as *farḍ* (obligatory). All these are direct Divine commands. Carrying these out means a direct obedience to Allah Almighty.

2. Then, there is the second part consisting of *aḥkām* or commands which needs to be explained. Here, the Holy Qur'ān often gives a terse or unspecified command the explanation of which is left to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم . Now, the explanation or enlargement of the subject which the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم takes up through his aḥādīth is also a kind of *waḥy* (revelation). If these explanations, based on personal judgment, miss something or fall short in any way, correction is made through *waḥy*. Finally, the word and deed of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم as it is in the end, becomes the interpretation of the Divine command.

Obedience to the Divine commands of this nature is, though, the very obedience, of the commands of Allah Almighty in reality, but, speaking formally, since these commands are not physically and explicitly the Qur'ān as such - they have reached the community through the blessed words of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم - therefore, obedience to them is academically said to be an obedience to the Messenger which, in reality, despite being in unison with obedience to the Divine, does have a status of its own if looked at outwardly. Therefore, throughout the Holy Qur'ān, the command to obey Allah has the allied command to obey the Messenger as a constant feature.

3. The third category of *Aḥkām* or commands are those which have not been explicitly mentioned in the Holy Qur'ān or in the Hadīth, or if they do appear in the later, the narrations about such commands found in the enormous treasure-house appear to be conflicting. In the

case of such *aḥkam*, Mujtahid 'Ulamā (scholars having the highest multi-dimensional expertise in religious knowledge through original sources) delve into the established texts of the Qur'ān and Sunnah along with a close study of precedents and parallels offered by the problem in consideration, giving their best thought and concern to arrive at the appropriate rule of conduct while staying within the parameters of the imperatives of the sacred texts. This being so, the obedience to these rules is one and the same as the obedience to the Divine because it has been, in all reality, deduced from the Qur'ān and Sunnah. But, when seen formally, these are known as juristic edicts or *fatāwā* as popularly understood and are attributed to religious scholars.

Under this very third category, come the *Aḥkām* which are free of any restrictions from the Qur'ān and Sunnah. In fact, here people have the choice to act as they wish. This, in the terminology of the Sharī'ah is known as *Mubāhāt* (plural of *Mubāh* meaning 'allowed'). The formulation, enforcement and management of orders and rules of this nature has been entrusted with rulers and their officials so that they can make laws in the background of existing conditions and considerations and make everybody follow these. Let us take the example of Karachi, the city where I live. How many post offices should there be in this city? Fifty or hundred? How many police stations? What transit system will serve the city best? What rules to follow in order to provide shelter for a growing population? All these areas of activity come under Mubāhāt, the allowed, the open field. None of its aspects are rated Wājib (necessary) or Ḥarām (forbidden). In fact, this whole thing is choice-oriented. But, should this choice be given to masses, no system would work. Therefore, the responsibility of organizing and running the system has been placed on the government.

Now, returning to basics it can be said that, in the present verse, the obedience to those in authority means obedience to both *'ulamā'* and *ḥukkām* (religious scholars and officials). According to this verse, it becomes necessary to obey Muslim jurists in matters which require juristic research, expertise and guidance as it would be equally necessary to obey those in authority in matters relating to administrative affairs.

This obedience too is, in reality, the obedience to the *aḥkām* or commands of Allah Almighty. But, as seen outwardly, these commands are not there in the Qur'ān or the Sunnah. Instead, they are either enunciated by religious scholars or the officials. It is for this reason that this particular call for obedience has been separated and placed at number three and given the distinct identity of 'obey those in authority'. Let us keep in mind that, the way it is binding and necessary to follow the Qur'ān in the specified textual provisions of the Qur'ān and follow the Messenger in the specified textual provisions of the Messenger, so it is necessary to follow Muslim jurists in matters relating to jurisprudence, matters which have not been textually specified, and to follow rulers and officials in matters relating to administration. This is what 'obedience to those in authority' means.

Obedience to authority in anti-Sharī'ah activities is not permissible

If we look at verse 58 and the command to 'judge between people with fairness' along with the command to 'obey those in authority' in verse 59, we can see a clear hint to the effect: If the Amīr, the authority in power, sticks to *'adl* (justice), obedience to him is *wājib* (necessary); and should he forsake justice and promulgate laws against the Sharī'ah, the *amīr* will not be obeyed as far as those laws are concerned. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said: لاطاعة لمخلوق فى معصية الخالق . Literally, 'there is no obedience to the created in the matter of disobedience to the Creator,' which means that such obedience to the created as makes disobedience to the Creator necessary is not permissible.

Another point which emerges from the statement: "And you judge between people, judge with fairness" (verse 58), is that a person who does not have the ability and the power to maintain equity and justice should not become a Qāḍī (judge), because "judging with fairness" is *amānah*, the great charge of the fulfillment of a trust obligation, something which cannot be guarded, defended and fulfilled by a weak and incapable person. Relevant to this is the case of Sayyidnā Abū Dharr رضى الله عنه who had requested the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم that he may be appointed as the governor of some place in the Islamic state. In reply, he said:

يا اباذر انك ضعيف وانّها امانة وانها يوم القيمة خزى وندامة الا من اخذ بحقها وادى الذى عليه فيها (رواه مسلم بحواله مظهرى)

"O Abū Dharr, you are weak and this is an office of trust, which may, on the Day of Doom, become the cause of disgrace and remorse, except for one who has fulfilled all his trust obligations, fully and duly (that is, he will be spared of that disgrace)." (Muslim, in Maẓhari)

The just person is the favourite servant of Allah

There is a ḥadīth in which the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been reported to have said: 'The just person is loved by Allah and he is the closest to Him, while the unjust person is cast far away from the mercy and grace of Allah.'

According to another ḥadīth, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said to his noble Companions: 'Do you know who will be the first to go under the shade of Allah?' They said: 'Allah and His Messenger know this best.' Then, he said: 'These will be people who, when truth appears, hasten to accept it; and when asked, they spend their wealth; and when they judge (between people), they do it as fairly as they would have done for themselves.'

The Proof of *Ijtihād* and *Qiyās*

Finally, let us now refer to the statement: فَإِنْ تَنَازَعْتُمْ فِي شَيْءٍ فَرُدُّوهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَالرَّسُولِ in verse 59 (Then, if you quarrel about something, revert it back to Allah and the Messenger.)

This 'reverting back to Allah and the Messenger' takes two forms:

1. Revert to *aḥkām*, the code of commands as mandated in the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allah.

2. If the textually-mandated *aḥkām* do not exist, the act of reverting back will be accomplished by analogical deduction (*Qiyās*) as based on their precedents.

The words of the expression: فردوه (revert it back) are general, thus being inclusive of both forms.

Verses 60 - 64

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ يَزْعُمُونَ أَنَّهُمْ آمَنُوا بِمَا أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْكَ وَمَا أُنْزِلَ

مِنْ قَبْلِكَ يُرِيْدُوْنَ اَنْ يَّتَحَاكَمُوْٓا اِلَى الطَّاغُوْتِ وَقَدْ اُمِرُوْٓا اَنْ
يَّكْفُرُوْا بِهٖ ؕ وَيُرِيْدُ الشَّيْطٰنُ اَنْ يُّضِلَّهُمْ ضَلٰلًاۢ بَعِيْدًا ﴿۶۰﴾ وَاِذَا
قِيْلَ لَهُمْ تَعَالَوْا اِلٰى مَآ اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ وَاِلَى الرَّسُوْلِ رَاَيْتَ
الْمُنٰفِقِيْنَ يَصُدُّوْنَ عَنْكَ صُدُوْدًا ﴿۶۱﴾ فَكَيْفَ اِذَآ اَصَابَتْهُمْ
مُّصِيْبَةٌۢ بِمَا قَدَّمَتْ اَيْدِيْهِمْ ثُمَّ جَآءُوْكَ يَحْلِفُوْنَ ۖ بِاللّٰهِ اِنْ
اَرَدْنَآ اِلَّآ اِحْسَانًا وَّتَوْفِيْقًا ﴿۶۲﴾ اُولٰٓئِكَ الَّذِيْنَ يَعْلَمُ اللّٰهُ مَا
فِيْ قُلُوْبِهِمْ ۖ فَاَعْرِضْ عَنْهُمْ وَعِظْهُمْ وَقُلْ لَّهُمْ فِيْٓ اَنْفُسِهِمْ
قَوْلًاۢ بَلِيْغًا ﴿۶۳﴾ وَمَآ اَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ رَّسُوْلٍ اِلَّا لِيُطَاعَ بِاِذْنِ اللّٰهِ ؕ
وَلَوْ اَنَّهُمْ اِذْ ظَّلَمُوْٓا اَنْفُسَهُمْ جَآءُوْكَ فَاسْتَغْفَرُوا اللّٰهَ
وَاسْتَغْفَرَ لَهُمُ الرَّسُوْلُ لَوَجَدُوا اللّٰهَ تَوَّابًا رَّحِيْمًا ﴿۶۴﴾

Have you not seen those who claim that they have believed in what was revealed to you and what was revealed before you? They want to take their disputes to the Ṭāghūt while they were ordered to reject it. And the Satan wants to mislead them to a remote wrong way. [60]

And when it is said to them, "Come to what Allah has revealed and to the Messenger," you will see the hypocrites turning away from you in aversion. [61]

But, how will it be when they will come to suffer a calamity because of the acts of their own hands, then they will come to you swearing by Allah, "We meant nothing but to promote good and bring about harmony." [62]

Those are the ones Allah knows what is in their hearts. So, ignore what they are and give them good counsel and speak to them about themselves in appealing words. [63]

And We did not send any Messenger but to be obeyed by the leave of Allah. And had they, after having wronged themselves, come to you and sought forgiveness from Allah and the Messenger sought forgiveness

for them, they would have certainly found Allah most-relenting, very-merciful. [64]

Verses previous to these carried the command to revert back to the mandate given by Allah and the Messenger in all matters. In the present verses which follow, the act of reverting to laws contrary to the Sharī'ah has been censured.

Commentary

The background of the revelation of these verses

There is a special incident behind the revelation of these verses, the details of which identify a hypocrite by the name of Bishr. He got into a dispute with a Jew. The Jew said, "Let us go to Muḥammad ﷺ and ask him to settle our dispute.' But, Bishr, the hypocrite, did not accept this proposal. Instead, he came up with a counter-proposal suggesting that they go to a Jew, Ka'b ibn Ashraf and let him give a decision. Ka'b ibn Ashraf was a tribal chief among the Jews and was a sworn enemy of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and his Muslim followers. It was a strange coincidence that a Jew would leave his chief aside and elect to go by the judgement of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, while Bishr, who called himself a Muslim, would bypass him and elect to go by the judgement of the Jewish chief. But, there was a secret behind it. Both of them were certain that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم will give a judgement which is bound to be true and just. It will be free from apprehensions about any tilt or favour or misunderstanding. Since the Jew was on the right in this dispute, so he had more confidence in the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم as compared to his own chief, Ka'b ibn Ashraf. Bishr, the hypocrite was in the wrong, therefore, he knew that the Prophet's judgement will be against him - even though he claimed to be a Muslim while his adversary was a Jew.

However, after some mutual cross talk between them, both of them agreed upon the option of going to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and requesting him to give a decision in their dispute. So, the case went to him. He made relevant investigation in the case which proved that the Jew was in the right. Consequently, he gave a decision in his favour. But, on the other side, there was Bishr, a pretending Muslim, who lost his case before him. He was not pleased with this judgement, so he hit upon a new plan - to persuade the Jew to somehow agree to go to

Sayyidnā 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb رضى الله عنه and have him give a decision in their case. The Jew agreed. There was a secret here too. Bishr was under the impression that Sayyidnā 'Umar is usually hard on disbelievers so he would, rather than decide in favour of the Jew, decide in his favour.

Thus, they both reached Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنه. The Jew told him everything about the incident and also narrated to him how the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had already given his decision in this case and that 'this man was not satisfied with it and had, therefore, brought his case before you.'

Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنه asked Bishr, "Is this what really happened?" He confessed that this is how it was. Thereupon, Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنه said: "All right, you wait here, I am coming." He went into the house and came out with a sword which he swung to finish the hypocrite off, saying: "This is the decision for him who is dissatisfied with the decision of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم" (This incident appears in Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās as narrated by Tha'labī and Ibn Abī Ḥātim).

Most commentators have also added that, following this incident, the heirs of the hypocrite thus killed filed a suit against Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنه accusing him of having killed a Muslim without adequate legal authority as admitted by the Sharī'ah of Islām. To strengthen their case, they submitted interpretations of his *kufr* (disbelief) in words and deeds in order to prove his being a Muslim. In the present verse, Allah Almighty has unfolded the reality behind the case, confirming that the person killed was a hypocrite, and thus it was that Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنه was absolved.

Also reported are some other incidents of this nature where people had bypassed clear Islamic legal verdict to finally accept the decision of a soothsayer or astrologer. It is possible that the present verse was revealed about all such incidents.

The explanation of verses

The first verse (60) exposes the claim of those who say that they have believed in earlier scriptures, the Torah and the Evangile, and now believe in the Book (the Qur'ān) revealed to the Holy Prophet

Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وسلم . That is, earlier in time, they were a part of the community of the people of the Book, then they entered the fold of Islam and became a part of the Muslim community. The verse warns that this claim of theirs is simply a verbal camouflage for their hypocricy. Their hearts are stuffed with the same old disbelief which has come out in the open during this dispute when Bishr, bypassing the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم , proposed that the Jewish chief, Ka'b ibn Ashraf be the judge in that dispute and, in addition to that, later when the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم gave a clear and just decision, he found it unacceptable.

The comment which follows immediately, employs the word, "Ṭāghūt" which has been left untranslated. Lexically, "Ṭāghūt" primarily means 'one who exceeds the limits.' In usage, the Satan is referred to as Ṭāghūt. In this verse, carrying the dispute to Ka'b ibn Ashraf has been equated with carrying it to the Satan. The reason could be that Ka'b ibn Ashraf was himself a satan personified, or it could be that bypassing a decision under the God-given law and preferring a decision contrary to it can only come from the teaching of the Satan. About anyone who follows this course, it is clear that he has virtually taken his case to the court of none else but the Satan. Therefore, right there in the end of this verse, there appears the warning that those who follow the Satan, the Satan will mislead them to a remote wrong way.

The second verse (61) tells us that turning away from the decision of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم , given under the dictates of the Sharī'ah in matters relating to mutual quarrels and disputes, can never be the response of a Muslim. One who does it has to be a *munāfiq* (hypocrite). Thus, when the disbelief of this hypocrite was practically exposed through his dissatisfaction with the decision of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم , his being killed by Sayyidnā 'Umar became all the more justified, because he no more remained a *munāfiq* (hypocrite) and, in fact, became an open Kāfir (or apostate). Therefore, it was said; 'And when it is said to them, "Come to what Allah has revealed, and to the Messenger," you will see the hypocrites turning away from you in aversion.'

The third verse (62) exposes as false all interpretations advanced by

those who bypassed decisions given under God-given laws only to turn to decisions which were contrary to it. Their plea, in gist, was that they did not bypass the Messenger of Allah for any reason of lack of belief in the truth of his station and mission and that they did not prefer the decision of others over his decisions as if it was the ultimate Truth. Rather, they claimed, there were expedient considerations which led them to taking this course of action. For instance, one such expedient consideration was that, a case going to the Messenger of Allah would have meant that the decision would have been strictly legal, true and just - devoid of any options of mutual patch-up and tolerance (of 'other' factors not necessarily just). Naturally, articulating deceptively, they said they took the case somewhere else so that something good shows up for both parties through a mutual conciliation.

As evident, they came up with all these interpretations only when their secret was revealed and their wickedness and hypocricy came out in the open and their man was killed at the hands of Sayyidnā 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ . In short, it was a consequence of their evil deed which brought upon them the disgrace or disaster of an accomplice killed, following which they started making statements on oath with all sorts of excuses and interpretations. Allah Almighty, in this verse, makes it very clear that these people are liars in their oaths and interpretations and that everything they have done, they have done because of their disbelief and hypocricy. Their pattern of behaviour is that, when called to come to the Book of Allah and to His Messenger, they would turn away, all averse - which is no hallmark of a true Muslim. But they, as the verse says, would become all alert once they get into trouble as a result of their own evil deeds - like when the exposure of their breach of trust or hypocricy brings shame on them, or when it leads to the killing of their man - then, they come to the Messenger swearing by Allah that they meant nothing but good. That they took their case to somebody else was not because they did not believe in the Prophet, or that they doubted the veracity of his judgement, but that their aim was to promote good and bring about harmony between the disputing parties.

The fourth verse (63) comes up with the answer. It says that Allah

is all-aware of the disbelief and hypocricy rooted in their hearts. All their interpretations are false, and their oaths, an excercise in lying. So, the Holy Prophet ﷺ is being asked to ignore their excuses and reject their charge of excess against Sayyidnā 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ , as the disbelief of this particular hypocrite had become manifest.

After that, towards the end of this verse (63), the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been asked to give good counsel to the rest of the hypocrites as well, in a way that may touch their hearts, that is, tell them to fear what lies beyond the present life and invite them to follow the path of Islam sincerely, or remind them of their likely worldly punishment in the event they stuck to their hypocricy which might be exposed some day, some time, and they might as well meet the same fate as did Bishr, the hypocrite.

The fifth verse (64) begins by stating a universal Divine principle: 'And We did not send any Messenger but to be obeyed by the leave of Allah.' It means that any Messenger who was sent by Allah was sent so that everyone obeys the rules set by him in accordance with the will and command of Allah Almighty. In that case, the inevitable consequence will be that anyone who opposes the rules set by the Messenger will be dealt with in the manner disbelievers are dealt with. Therefore, whatever Sayyidnā 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ did turned out to be correct. Following this appears an advice in the best interest of the hypocrites indicating that they would have done better if, rather than indulge in false oaths and interpretations, they would have confessed their error and presented themselves before him seeking forgiveness from Allah, and the Messenger too prayed for their forgiveness, then, Allah Almighty would have certainly accepted their repentance.

At this place, for the repentance to be acceptable, two things have been made binding: That they present themselves before the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم and that he then prays for their forgiveness. Perhaps, the first reason is that they violated the great station of prophethood bestowed by Allah Almighty on His noble Messenger ﷺ and caused him undue pain by disregarding the decision given by him. So, in order that their repentance over their crime becomes acceptable, the condition that they present themselves before the Holy Prophet ﷺ and that he prays for their forgiveness was imposed on them.

Although, this verse (64) was revealed in the background of a particular incident relating to the hypocrites, yet its words yield a general ruling which stipulates that anyone who presents himself before the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and he prays for his forgiveness, he will definitely be forgiven. And 'the presence before the Holy Prophet ﷺ,' as it would have been during his blessed life in this mortal world, holds the same effect even today as the visit to the sacred precincts of the Mosque of the Prophet and the act of 'presenting' oneself before the blessed resident of the sanctified mausoleum falls within the jurisdiction of this rule.

Sayyidnā 'Alī رضى الله عنه has said: "Three days after we all had finished with the burial of the Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم a villager came and fell down close to the blessed grave. Weeping bitterly, he referred to this particular verse of the Qur'ān and addressing himself to the blessed grave, he said: 'Allah Almighty has promised in this verse that a sinner, if he presented himself before the *Rasūl* of Allah, and the *Rasūl* elects to pray for his forgiveness, then he will be forgiven. Therefore, here I am, presenting myself before you so that I may be blessed with your prayer for my forgiveness.' People personally present there at that time say that, in response to the pleading of the villager, a voice coming out from the sanctified mausoleum rang around with the words: قَدْ غُفِرَلَكَ meaning: You have been forgiven. (al-Bahr al-Muhit)

Verse 65

فَلَا وَرَبِّكَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ حَتّٰى يُحَكِّمُوْكَ فِيْمَا شَجَرَ بَيْنَهُمْ ثُمَّ لَا يَجِدُوْا فِيْٓ اَنْفُسِهِمْ حَرَجًا مِّمَّا قَضَيْتَ وَيُسَلِّمُوْا تَسْلِيْمًا ﴿٦٥﴾

So never, by your Lord, never shall they become believers unless they make you the judge in the disputes which arise between them, then find no discomfort in their hearts against what you have decided and surrender to it in total submission. [65]

Commentary

Not accepting the decision of the Holy Prophet is *Kufr*

This verse, while projecting a powerful view of the highly exalted

station of the noble Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم , presents a very explicit statement concerning the need to obey him, something conclusively proved by so many verses of the Holy Qur'ān. The verse opens with the ultimate oath, "by your Lord", following which Allah Almighty proclaims that nobody can become a Muslim unless he accepts the verdict of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم willingly, calmly and fully to the extent that there remains even in his heart not the slightest strain because of this verdict.

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is himself the exerciser of God-given authority over his community in his capacity as the Messenger of Allah and he is thus responsible for adjudicating in every dispute that may arise. The authority he excercises in making decisions certainly does not depend upon his being made a judge by some litigants. We should also keep in mind that Muslims have been asked to make the prophet their judge because people are generally not satisfied with judgements delivered by someone appointed by the government as compared with an arbitrator they themselves choose to have. But, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is not only the ruler of a state, he is a Messenger of Allah, protected against sins by Him, and sent as mercy for the worlds, and also a loving father for his community - so, the compassionate instruction given is that, whenever a situation of conflict arises in social or religious matters, the contesting parties are duty-bound to make the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم the arbitrator and judge and have him give the final verdict, and once the verdict has been given by him, let them all accept it whole-heartedly and act accordingly.

The Authority of the Holy Prophet ﷺ extends to all times

Commentators say that acting in accordance with this command of the Holy Qur'ān is not restricted to the blessed times when he graced this mortal world. After him, the verdict of the sacred Law left by him, is nothing but his own verdict. Therefore, the rule reigns supreme right through the Last Day, the rule that guidance should be sought by turning directly to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم during his blessed life-time, and after him, one must turn to his Sharī'ah which is, in all reality, a return to him, may Allah bless him for ever and ever.

Some problems and their solutions

1. To begin with, as already stated earlier, the rule is that a person who is not satisfied with the decision given by the Holy Prophet ﷺ, in every dispute and in every problem or issue, is not a Muslim. As we already know, this was the reason why Sayyidnā 'Umar killed the person who was not satisfied with the decision given by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم following which he carried the case to Sayyidnā 'Umar for an alternate judgement. The heirs of the person killed went to the court of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم with a suit against Sayyidnā 'Umar accusing him of having killed a Muslim without a valid legal reason. It is important to note here, and this has not been taken up earlier, that the following words, when the case was presented before the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, came out spontaneously from his blessed lips: " ماكنت أظن أن عمر يجترء على قتل رجل مؤمن " (that is, I never thought 'Umar will ever dare killing a believing Muslim). This proves that the higher authority, when approached with an appeal against the decision of a lower authority, should not take sides with his subordinate authority, but should come up with a decision based on justice and fairness alone, as it has been illustrated above where the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم expressed his displeasure over the decision of Sayyidnā 'Umar - before the revelation of the verse had a bearing on this incident. Once this verse was revealed, the reality came out in the open that the person killed was not a believing Muslim as confirmed by this verse.

2. The second ruling which emerges from the expression: فِيمَا شَجَرَ (in the disputes which arise) settles that it is not restricted to dealings and rights alone; it covers articles of belief, ideas and many other theoretical problems. (al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ) Therefore, given such a wide spectrum of intellectual and social activity, it is not unlikely that things could go to the undesirable limits of mutual differences in views and ways when confronting a certain problem. When this does happen, it is the duty of a Muslim not to continue mutual disputation, instead of which, both parties should revert back to the Holy Prophet ﷺ, and when he is not with them personally, they must revert back to his Sharī'ah to search for the solution of their problems.

3. The third rule of self-assessment that we find from here is:

Doing something, which was provenly said or done by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, with a heavy heart is a sign of weakness in faith (*'Īmān*). For example. there are occasions when the Sharī'ah has allowed the performance of *ṣalāh* by making *tayammum* in place of the regular *wuḍū* with water; now, if a person feels uneasy and not so satisfied with the idea of making the symbolic *tayammum* in place of a regular *wuḍū* he would very much like to do, then, he should not take this attitude of his as a sign of *taqwā* or piety, instead, he should take it to be caused by some spiritual sickness. Who can be more *muttaqī*, more God-fearing than the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم? If the form and condition in which he allowed people to perform their prayers while sitting - and he himself performed it while sitting - does not find favour with a person looking for the satisfaction of his heart, and he elects to undergo unbearable hardship by insisting to stand and perform his prayer in that position, then, he better be sure that there is some sickness is his heart. However, if a person, whose pain or discomfort or need is not that acute, elects not to use the leave (*rukhṣah*) given to him by the Sharī'ah and, instead of that, chooses to take the path of high determination (*'azīmah*) which is, then, correct in accordance with the very teaching of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. But feeling any strain in utilizing the leaves (*rukhsah*) granted by the Sharī'ah as some sort of absolute rule is no *taqwā*. It is for this reason that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said: إِنَّ اللّٰهَ تَعَالٰى يُحِبُّ اَنْ تُؤْتٰى رُخَصُهٗ كَمَا يُحِبُّ اَنْ تُؤْتٰى عَزَائِمُهٗ (that is, 'the way Allah Almighty is pleased with what is done with high determination, so is He pleased with what is done by using leaves).'

The best method of general *'Ibadāt* (acts of worship), *Adhkār* (plural of *dhikr*: the remembrance of Allah), *Aurād* (plural of *wird:* self-allotted voluntary recitations, made privately in specified hours of the morning or night), *Durūd* (prayer to Allah that peace and blessings be on the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم), and *Tasbīḥ* (glorification of Allah) is no different than what used to be the routine of the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself and which was, after him, followed consistently by his noble Companions, may Allah be pleased with them all. All Muslims must, as a matter or personal obligation, find these out from the authentic and sound narrations of ḥadīth so that they can make them an integral part of their daily routine of life.

Special Note

Details given above clearly show that the Holy Prophet ﷺ was not only a reformer and moral leader but was a just ruler as well, an authority of such class and majesty that his judgement was declared to be the very criterion of belief and disbelief, a distinguishing feature between *'Īmān* and *Kufr*, as evident from the incident relating to Bishr, the hypocrite. To make this prophetic station more explicit, Allah Almighty has, at many places in His sacred Book made the obedience of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم mandatory along with His own due obedience incumbent on all believers. Thus, the Qur'ān says: أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ (Obey Allah and obey the Messenger - 3:32; 3:132; 4:59; 5:92; 24:54; 47:33; 64:12). Then, elsewhere it says: مَنْ يُطِعِ الرَّسُولَ فَقَدْ أَطَاعَ اللَّهَ (Whoever obeys the Messenger, he really obeys Allah - 4:80).[1]

A little deliberation in these verses will unfold the radiant grandeur of his authority, a practical demonstration of which became manifest when Allah Almighty sent to him His Law so that he can decide cases in accordance with it. Therefore, it was said: إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الْكِتٰبَ بِالْحَقِّ لِتَحْكُمَ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ بِمَا أَرٰىكَ اللَّهُ (that is, 'We revealed to you the Book with the truth so that you may judge between people by what Allah makes you see.') (4:105)

Verses 66 - 68

وَلَوْ أَنَّا كَتَبْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ أَنِ اقْتُلُوٓا أَنْفُسَكُمْ أَوِ اخْرُجُوا مِنْ
دِيَارِكُمْ مَّا فَعَلُوهُ إِلَّا قَلِيلٌ مِّنْهُمْ ۖ وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ فَعَلُوا مَا
يُوعَظُونَ بِهٖ لَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَّهُمْ وَأَشَدَّ تَثْبِيتًا ﴿٦٦﴾ وَإِذًا لَّاٰتَيْنٰهُمْ
مِّنْ لَّدُنَّآ أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا ﴿٦٧﴾ وَّلَهَدَيْنٰهُمْ صِرَاطًا مُّسْتَقِيمًا ﴿٦٨﴾

And if We had prescribed for them that they should kill themselves or that they should migrate from their homeland, they would have not done it, except a few of them. And if they had done what they were advised to do it would have been better for them, and more effective in making (them) firm. [66] **And in that case, We would have certainly given them a great reward** [67]

1. For a detailed treatment of this aspect, please see "The Authority of Sunnah" by Muhammad Taqi Usmani.

and we would have certainly led them to a straight path. [68]

The present verses and those appearing immediately earlier were revealed in the background of an incident relating to Bishr, the hypocrite. As we already know, he had first proposed Ka'b Ibn Ashraf, the Jew as the adjudicator of his dispute, but, later on, mutual discussions forced him to go to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم for this purpose. Since the judgement of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was against him, he did not accept it and went to Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنه for a totally fresh decision.

When the news of this incident got around in the city of Madīnah, the Jews chided Muslims by saying: 'What sort of people you really are? Here you are believing in a Messenger of Allah and claiming to follow him, yet you do not accept his decisions! Look, in order that their repentance be accepted, the Jews were commanded to kill each other. This was a severe command, but we obeyed it, so much so that seventy thousand of our people were killed. If you were given a command like that, what would you have done?' Thereupon, the verse: وَلَوْ اَنَّا كَتَبْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ (And if We had prescribed for them ...) was revealed. It means: If these hypocrites, or all common people, disbelievers or believers, were charged with some severe command, such as that of self-killing or migration like the Banī Isrā'īl were ordered to do, very few of them would have, being what they are, obeyed this command.

On the one hand, there is a stern warning here for people who try to seek the solutions of their disputes, not from the Messenger of Allah, or not from the Law and Way of the Messenger of Allah, but take it elsewhere. On the other hand, it answers the chiding of the Jews because this state of affairs fits the hypocrites and certainly not those who are firm in their faith as true Muslims. This is proved by what happened when this verse was revealed. Someone from among the noble Companions, may Allah be pleased with them all, said: 'Allah did not put us through this trial.' When this statement was relayed to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, he said: 'There are people in my community in whose heart Faith is entrenched firm like mountains.' Ibn Wahab says that this statement was made by Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضى الله عنه.

According to another narration, when Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضی اللہ عنہ heard this verse, he said: 'Had this command been prescribed, by God, I would have been the first to sacrifice myself and my family to obey it.'

According to some other narrations, when this verse was revealed, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said: 'If this command to self-kill or migrate had come from Allah, Umm 'Abd (meaning Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd رضی اللہ عنہ) would have definitely acted accordingly.' As for migration, the noble Companions acted faithfully and selflessly when they left their homes in Makkah, left their properties and businesses, and migrated to Madīnah.

Towards the end of the verse (66), it has been said that, difficult though it may seem, yet doing so in obedience to their Lord's command would turn out to be better for them in the end. This will make their faith more firm, bringing a great reward from Allah, and the blessing of being guided to the straight path.

This great reward promised here in the end of verse 67 for those who obey Allah and His Messenger has been described immediately after in verses 69 and 70 which follow with detailed explanations of the promised ranks.

Verses 69 - 70

وَمَنْ يُّطِعِ اللّٰهَ وَالرَّسُوْلَ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ مَعَ الَّذِيْنَ اَنْعَمَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِمْ
مِّنَ النَّبِيّٖنَ وَالصِّدِّيْقِيْنَ وَالشُّهَدَآءِ وَالصّٰلِحِيْنَ ۚ وَحَسُنَ اُولٰٓئِكَ
رَفِيْقًا ﴿٦٩﴾ ذٰلِكَ الْفَضْلُ مِنَ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَكَفٰى بِاللّٰهِ عَلِيْمًا ﴿٧٠﴾

And those who obey Allah and the Messenger are with those whom Allah has blessed, namely, the prophets, the *Siddiqīn* [1], the *Shuhadā'* [2], and the righteous - and

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1. *Ṣiddīq*, lexically means 'very truthful'. In the Islamic terminology, it normally refers to those Companions of a prophet who excel all others in their submission to Allah and His Messenger. They enjoy the highest status of piety after the Prophets, like Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضی اللہ عنہ.

2. *Shuhadā'* (pl. of *Shahīd*) means the persons who sacrificed their lives in the way of Allah. The word has not been translated here by the word 'martyr' which sometimes is taken as an equivalent of *Shahīd*, because the word 'martyr' is also applied for the persons killed in ethnic or racial wars while they may not be termed as '*Shuhadā'*' in the Islamic terminology.

what a good company they are. [69] **That grace is from Allah and Allah is sufficient being the One who knows.** [70]

In the verses appearing immediately earlier, the promise of a great reward was made to special addressees. What appears in the present verses is a universal promise that those who obey Allah and His Messenger shall be rewarded as a standing rule.

Commentary:

Deeds will be the criterion in ranks of Paradise

Those who do everything Allah and His Messenger have asked them to do and stay away from everything Allah and His Messenger have prohibited, shall receive different ranks in terms of their deeds. The foremost among them will be blessed with the highest stations of Paradise alongwith the noble prophets, may peace be upon them all. Next to them will come those who will be blessed with the rank of those who are only next to prophets. They are known as the *Ṣiddiqin*, that is, the great Companions of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم who came forward to believe in the very initial stage without any hesitation or hostility, like Sayyidnā Abū Bakr. Then, there will be a third rank of people who will be with the noble *Shuhadā'*. The *Shuhadā'* are people who sacrificed their lives and wealth in the way of Allah. Then, those in the fourth rank will be with the revered Righteous. The Ṣāliḥīn or the Righteous are people who restrict themselves, outwardly and inwardly, to doing only what is good and right.

In short, all those who are totally obedient to Allah and His Messenger shall be in the company of those who are the most exalted and the most favoured in the sight of Allah Almighty and who have been identified here under four ranks: Prophets, *Ṣiddiqīn*, *Shuhadā'* and *Ṣāliḥīn* (righteous).

The Background of Revelation

This verse was revealed in the background of a special event which has been reported by the great commentator, Ibn Kathīr as based on several sound authorities.

It so happened, narrates Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها, that a Companion came to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم one day and said to

him: '*Yā Rasūlallāh*, I hold you dear, dearer than my own life, even more than my wife and more than my children. There are times when I do not seem to be at peace with myself even in my house until I come to you and have the pleasure of looking at you. That finally gives me the peace I missed. Now, I am worried about the time when you will leave this mortal world and I too will be taken away by death. In that case, what I know for sure is that you will be in Paradise with the blessed prophets housed in its most exalted stations. As for myself, first of all, I just do not know whether or not I shall be able to reach Paradise. Even if I do reach there, the level where I shall be will be way below from where you are. If I am unable to visit you and have the pleasure of seeing you there, how am I going to put this impatient heart of mine at rest?'

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم quietly heard what he said, but made no response, until came the revelation of this particular verse (69):

وَمَنْ يُّطِعِ اللّٰهَ وَالرَّسُوْلَ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ مَعَ الَّذِيْنَ اَنْعَمَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِمْ مِّنَ النَّبِيّٖنَ
وَالصِّدِّيْقِيْنَ وَالشُّهَدَآءِ وَالصّٰلِحِيْنَ ﴿٦٩﴾

It was only then that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم gave him the glad tidings that the obedient ones shall have occasions to meet with the prophets, the *Ṣiddiqīn*, the *Shuhadā'* and the righteous. In other words, despite the relative precedence of ranks in Paradise, there will be occasions of meeting and sitting together.

Some forms of 'meeting' in Paradise

One such form will be that people will see each other from where they are, as it has been reported in Mu'aṭṭā of Imām Mālik on the authority of a narration from Sayyidnā Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī رضى الله عنه that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: 'The inmates of Paradise will see those in the strata above them like you see stars in the physical world.'

Also there will be yet another form when visits will be made to the strata where they are, as Ibn Jarīr has reported on the authority of a narration from Sayyidnā Rabī' that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, while explaining this verse, said: 'Those of the strata above will come down to those of the strata below to meet and sit with them.'

It it also possible that those of the strata below have the permission to visit and meet those of the higher strata, as the Holy Prophet ﷺ has, on the basis of this verse, given many people the glad tidings of being with him in the Paradise.

It appears in Sahīh Muslim that Sayyidnā Ka'b ibn Aslamī رضى الله عنه used to spend nights in the company of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم At the time of *Tahajjud* on one of such nights, Sayyidnā Ka'b Aslamī brought water for *wuḍū*, the *miswāk* and other things he might need at that time. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, quite pleased with him, said: 'Is there anything I can do for you? Go ahead, ask.' Sayyidnā Ka'b Aslamī said: 'I wish to have your company in Paradise.' He said: 'Anything else?' Sayyidnā Ka'b said: 'Nothing else.' Thereupon, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: 'If you want to be with me in Paradise, then "أعنى على نفسك بكثرة السجود" (literally - 'help me by taking upon yourself the doing of plenty of prostrations'). The elegant prophetic expression means that 'your wish shall be granted, but you can also help me in this by offering plenty of prostrations (*sujūd*, *sajdah*) that is, plenty of voluntary prayers (*nawāfil*).

According to the Musnad of Aḥmad, a man came to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and said: '*Yā Rasūlallāh*, I have testified that there is none worthy of worship other than Allah, and that you are the true Messenger of Allah, and I dutifully perform the five prescribed prayers every day, pay the Zakāh due on me and fast during the month of Ramaḍān.' Hearing this, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: 'Anyone who dies in this state will be with the prophets, the *Ṣiddiqīn* and the *Shuhadā'* - only if he does not disobey his parents.'

Similarly, there is another ḥadīth from Tirmidhī in which the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is reported to have said: التاجر الصدوق الامين مع النبيين وَالصِّدِّيْقِيْنَ وَالشُّهَدَآءِ (The businessman who is truthful and trusty will be with the prophets and the Ṣiddiqīn and the Shuhadā').

Love is the *sine qua non* of Nearness

The blessed company of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم can be acquired by loving him. This is conclusively proved by what has been reported in Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī on the authority of many uninterrupted chains of narrations from a large body of the noble Companions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ that he, on being asked as to what will be the status

of a person who does belong to a group emotionally but fails to achieve the standards of deeds set by it, said: اَلْمَرْءُ مَعَ مَنْ اَحَبَّ, that is, (on the Day of Resurrection) everyone will be with the ones whom he loves.

Sayyidnā Anas رضى الله عنه says that the Noble Companions were never so pleased with anything else in this mortal world as they were when they heard this hadīth, because it gave them the most wonderful news, a delightful prophecy indeed, that those who love the Holy Prophet ﷺ will be with their noble master on the plains of Resurrection and in the gardens of Paradise.

The company of the Holy Prophet ﷺ is not restricted to any colour or race

In al-Mu'jim al-Kabīr al-Ṭabarānī has reported from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar رضى الله عنه that an Ethiopian came to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and said: '*Yā Rasūlallāh*, may His blessings be upon you, not only that you are distinct from us in the beauty of your physique and the colour of your skin but you also have the distinction of being a prophet and messenger of Allah. Now, if I were to believe in what you believe and do what you do, can I too have the honour of being with you in the Paradise?'

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: 'Definitely yes (forget about your being black). I swear by the Power whose hands hold my life that all members of the black race will become fair and beautiful in Paradise radiating in their presence from a distance which might take a thousand years to cover. Then, Allah takes upon Himself the success and salvation of a person who says and believes in لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا اللّٰهُ (There is no god but Allah) and a person who recites سُبْحَانَ اللّٰهِ وَبِحَمْدِهٖ (*Subhānallāhi wa biḥamdihī*: 'Pure is Allah and praised is He') has one hundred and twenty four thousand virtues written in his Book of Deeds.'

Hearing this, someone present there said: '*Yā Rasūlallāh*, when Allah is generous in giving such enormous awards on such minor good deeds, how can we ever perish or be punished?' He said: '(That is not the point), the truth is that some people will come up on the Day of Doom with so many virtues and good deeds, so many that, should all these be placed on a mountain, even the mountain would find their weight too heavy to hold. But, when they are compared to the blessings from Allah (bestowed on them in the worldly life), man's deeds

and virtues remain no match to them - unless Allah Almighty Himself elects to be generous and merciful to him.

It was this question and answer with the Ethiopian brother which caused the revelation of the following verse of Sūrah Ad-Dahr: هَلْ اَتٰى عَلَى الْاِنْسَانِ حِيْنٌ مِّنَ الدَّهْرِ لَمْ يَكُنْ شَيْئًا مَّذْكُوْرًا (that is, man has indeed been through a period of time being nothing - 76:1). Surprised, the Ethiopian gentleman asked: '*Yā Rasūlallāh*, will my eyes be seeing the same blessing which your blessed eyes will be witnessing?'

He said: 'Definitely yes.' Hearing this, the newly converted Muslim from Ethiopia started weeping and so much so that he died in that very state - weeping his heart out. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم performed his last rites, bathing and shrouding and offering *ṣalātul-janāzah* and burial, all with his own blessed hands.

Ranks of Paradise: Some details

Now that we have gone through an explanation of the verse, including the background of its revelation and related clarifications, the only thing that remains to be determined is the nature of the four ranks of people blessed by Allah. We have to find out as to what is the basis on which these ranks have been established, how they are inter-connected and how are they different from each other, and whether or not can these converge into one person.

Commentators have written in great details about this subject. Some say that all these four ranks can be found in one person. According to them, all these attributes are overlapping because the one identified as 'prophet' in the Holy Qur'ān has also been called by the title of '*ṣiddīq*'. For example, it has been said about Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام : اِنَّهٗ كَانَ صِدِّيْقًا نَّبِيًّا (Surely, he was a man of truth, a prophet - 19:41); and about Sayyidnā Yaḥyā عليه الصلوة والسلام : وَنَبِيًّا مِّنَ الصّٰلِحِيْنَ (and a prophet from among the righteous - 3:39); and similarly, about Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه الصلوة والسلام : وَكَهْلًا وَّ مِنَ الصّٰلِحِيْنَ (and he shall speak to the people in the cradle) 'as well as in middle age, and shall be one of the righteous' - 3:46.

The outcome is that, though these four attributes and ranks are distinct in terms of meaning and sense, yet it is possible to find all these combined in one person. Let us take an example to illustrate the

proposition. Religious scholars, the 'ulamā' are identified by their attributions, such as a Mufassir (commentator of the Holy Qur'ān), a Muḥaddith (scholar of ḥadīth), a Faqīh (Muslim jurist), a Muwarrikh (historian). But, there could be some scholars who may combine in their person the excellence of all these fields. In our own time, when the trend is towards inter-disciplinary education and training, it is not so difficult to conceive the convergence of the attributes of a doctor, an engineer and a pilot, all in one person.

However, in accordance with commonly recognized practice, a person gets to be identified with an attribute which comes to take a dominating position in his life-work because of which such a person is usually associated with that particular field. It is for this reason that commentators generally take 'Ṣiddiqīn' to mean the most illustrious Companions of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم and Shuhadā' to mean the martyrs of the battle of Uḥud and Ṣāliḥīn as signifying the general run of righteous Muslims.

Imām Rāghib al-Isfahānī has determined that all these four ranks are different. The same things find mention in Tafsīr al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ, Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī and Maẓharī. The sense of this approach is that Allah Almighty has, in this verse classified true Muslims in four categories or ranks and for each He has appointed stations of precedence, and common Muslims have been induced to see that they do not lag far behind in their efforts to achieve the rankings of any of these ideal ones. Waging the best of their intellectual and practical struggle, they must do the best they can to reach such stations of excellence. However, the station of prophethood is something which can never be acquired by effort and struggle, but there is something one still gets to have and that is the company of the prophets. Imām Rāghib says that the highest among these ranks is that of the prophets, may peace be upon them. They enjoy the support of the Divine power. They are like someone who is seeing something from a close range. Therefore, Allah Almighty has said about such people: أَفَتُمٰرُونَهُ عَلٰى مَا يَرٰى (Do you argue with him over what he sees? - 53:12).

The definition of the Ṣiddiqīn

The second rank is that of the Ṣiddiqīn. These are people close to the blessed prophets in the quality of spiritual excellence. They are

like someone seeing something from a distance. Somebody asked Sayyidnā 'Alī رضی الله عنه : 'Have you seen Allah Almighty?' He said: 'I cannot worship something I have not seen.' Then, he further said: 'Though people have not seen Allah Almighty with their eyes, but their hearts have seen Him through the realities of faith.' By his act of 'seeing', Sayyidnā 'Alī meant the kind of sighting he has referred to later, for such intellectual or intuitive perception is like seeing.

The definition of the Shuhadā'

The third rank is that of the Shuhadā'. These are people who recognize their ultimate objective through the chain of reasons and proofs. They have no access to direct vision, that is, *mushāhada* is what they miss. They are like someone seeing something in a mirror from a close range - very similar to what Ṣayyidnā Ḥārithah رضی الله عنه said: 'I feel I am seeing the Throne of my most sublime Lord.'

The expression اَنْ تَعْبُدَ اللّٰهَ كَاَنَّكَ تَرَاهُ (That you worship Allah as if you are seeing Him) in the famous ḥadīth may also be interpreted to mean this very kind of 'seeing'.

The definition of the Ṣāliḥīn

The third rank is that of the Ṣāliḥīn. These are people who recognize their ultimate objective through following the precepts of Sharī'ah. It is like someone sees something in a mirror from a distance. In the other part of the famous ḥadīth quoted above: فَاِنْ لَّمْ تَكُنْ تَرَاهُ فَاِنَّهٗ يَرَاكَ (And if you cannot see Him, then, He sees you anyway) the reference may be to this very level of 'seeing'. In short, this investigative approach taken by Imām Rāghib al-Isfahānī shows that all these ranks are ranks that reflect the quantum of knowledge one has of His Lord, and that the different gradations that are there are based on the respective rankings of this knowledge. As for the subject of the verse, it is clear enough. Here, all Muslims have been given the glad tidings that those who are totally obedient to Allah and His Messenger shall be with those who hold higher ranks in Paradise. May Allah Almighty bless us all with this love. *Āmīn*.

Verses 71 - 74

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا خُذُوْا حِذْرَكُمْ فَانْفِرُوْا ثُبَاتٍ اَوِ انْفِرُوْا

جَمِيعًا ﴿٧١﴾ وَإِنَّ مِنكُمْ لَمَن لَّيُبَطِّئَنَّ ۚ فَإِنْ أَصَابَتْكُم مُّصِيبَةٌ
قَالَ قَدْ أَنْعَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيَّ إِذْ لَمْ أَكُن مَّعَهُمْ شَهِيدًا ﴿٧٢﴾ وَلَئِنْ
أَصَابَكُمْ فَضْلٌ مِّنَ اللَّهِ لَيَقُولَنَّ كَأَن لَّمْ تَكُن بَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيْنَهُ
مَوَدَّةٌ يَا لَيْتَنِي كُنتُ مَعَهُمْ فَأَفُوزَ فَوْزًا عَظِيمًا ﴿٧٣﴾ فَلْيُقَاتِلْ
فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ الَّذِينَ يَشْرُونَ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا بِالْآخِرَةِ ۚ وَمَن
يُقَاتِلْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فَيُقْتَلْ أَوْ يَغْلِبْ فَسَوْفَ نُؤْتِيهِ أَجْرًا
عَظِيمًا ﴿٧٤﴾

O those who believe, take your precautions and march in groups or march off all together. [71] **And among you there is one who shall invariably fall back; then, if some calamity befalls you, he would say, "Allah has been so generous to me since I was not present with them."** [72] **And if there comes to you some bounty from Allah, he shall be saying - as if there was no friendship between you and him - "O that I would have been with them, then, I would have achieved a great success."** [73] **So, those who sell the worldly life for the Hereafter should fight in the way of Allah. And whoever fights in the way of Allah then gets killed or prevails, to him We shall give a great reward.** [74]

Before this, there was the command to obey Allah and His Messenger. Now, in the present verses, Jihād has been prescribed for the obedient and faithful so that they can vitalize their Faith and raise the word of Allah high and supreme. (Qurṭubī)

Commentary

Important Notes

In the first part of the verse: يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا خُذُوا حِذْرَكُمْ الخ (O those who believe, take your precautions ...), appears the command to ensure the supply of weapons, while the later part refers to the launching of Jihād action. This tells us two things right away. Firstly, as already clarified at several places, the act of getting together functional means to achieve a good purpose is not contrary to *tawakkul* or trust in God. Secondly, we see that the text limits itself to the command to ensure

the supply of weapons, but it does not promise that, because of this support, Muslims will have any guaranteed security against their enemies. By doing so, it has been indicated that the choice of using means is for nothing but a certain peace of mind, otherwise, the use of means as such does not carry any operational gain or loss. The Qur'ān has said: قُلْ لَّنْ يُّصِيْبَنَآ اِلَّا مَا كَتَبَ اللّٰهُ لَنَا (O Prophet) say: "Nothing will befall us except what Allah has prescribed for us." (9:51)

2. Let us look at the first verse again. It opens up with the command to get ready for Jihād followed by a description of the marching plan; the later has been expressed in two sentences, that is, فَانْفِرُوْا ثُبَاتٍ اَوِ انْفِرُوْا جَمِيْعًا (... and march in groups, or march off all together.) Here, the word, '*thubātin*' is the plural form of '*thubātun*' which means a small group and is used to denote a military company and was called a Sariyyah in the military campaigns of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. In that sense, it is being said here that Muslims, when they go out for Jihād, should not start off all alone. They should, rather, set out in the formation of small groups. The other alternative is to march as a large army: '*jamī'an*' because, in fighting, going alone is very likely to hurt --- the enemy is not going to let this opportunity slip out of their hands.

No doubt, this instruction has been given to Muslims for the particular occasion of Jihād, but, even in normal circumstances, this is what the Sharī'ah teaches - do not travel alone. In a ḥadīth, therefore, a lone traveller is called one satan and two of them two satans and three of them become a group or party. Similarly, there is another ḥadīth which says:

خير الصحابة اربعة، وخيرالسرايا أربع مائة، وخيرالجيوش اربعة آلاف

> 'The best companions are four and the best military company is that of four hundred and the best army is that of four thousand.' (From Mishkāt as reported by Al-Tabarānī)

3. Seen outwardly, the words of the verse 72 (... وَاِنَّ مِنْكُمْ) seem to suggest that this too is addressed to the believers, although the characteristics described later on cannot be taken to be those of the believers. Therefore, al-Qurṭubī says that they signify hypocrites. Since, they were the ones who used to claim being Muslims, at least outwardly. This is why they have been identified as a group from among the believers.

Verses 75 - 76

وَمَا لَكُمْ لَا تُقَاتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللّٰهِ وَالْمُسْتَضْعَفِينَ مِنَ الرِّجَالِ
وَالنِّسَآءِ وَالْوِلْدَانِ الَّذِينَ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَآ اَخْرِجْنَا مِنْ هٰذِهِ الْقَرْيَةِ
الظَّالِمِ اَهْلُهَا وَاجْعَلْ لَّنَا مِنْ لَّدُنْكَ وَلِيًّا وَّاجْعَلْ لَّنَا مِنْ
لَّدُنْكَ نَصِيرًا ﴿٧٥﴾ اَلَّذِينَ اٰمَنُوا يُقَاتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللّٰهِ
وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا يُقَاتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ الطَّاغُوتِ فَقَاتِلُوٓا اَوْلِيَآءَ
الشَّيْطٰنِ اِنَّ كَيْدَ الشَّيْطٰنِ كَانَ ضَعِيفًا ﴿٧٦﴾

What has happened to you that you do not fight in the way of Allah and for the oppressed among men, women and children who say, "Our Lord, take us out from this town whose people are cruel. And make for us from Your own a supporter, and make for us from Your own a helper." [75] **Those who believe fight in the way of Allah and those who disbelieve fight in the way of Ṭāghūt.[1] So, fight the friends of Satan. No doubt, the guile of Satan is feeble.** [76]

Commentary

Answering the call of the oppressed

Left behind in Makkah were Muslims who were unable to migrate because of physical weakness and insufficiency of resources. Later on, the disbelievers themselves stopped them from going and started hurting and harassing them in all sorts of ways so that they turn away from their faith in Islam. The names of some of these are preserved in exegetic works, for example, Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās and his mother, Sulyma ibn Ḥishām, Walīd ibn Walīd and Abū Jandal ibn Sahl, may Allah be pleased with them all (Qurṭubī). These blessed people kept facing tyranny and torture because of their unflinching faith showing no signs that they would ever surrender their firm stand on Islam. However, they did continue praying to Allah Almighty for deliverance from this hard life which was finally accepted by Him when He commanded Muslims to wage Jihād against the disbelievers and rescue the oppressed from their coercion and persecution.

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1. cf. Verse 55

According to this verse, Muslims had requested Allah Almighty the favour of two things - that they be rescued from that town (meaning Makkah) and that they be blessed with some supporter and helper. The fact is that Allah Almighty granted both these prayers when He provided some of them with the opportunity to move out from there which was the fulfillment of their first wish. However, some of them remained staying right there until the Conquest of Makkah. At that time, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم appointed Sayyidnā 'Attāb ibn Asīd as their caretaker and who had the oppressed Muslims delivered from their oppressors. Thus, granted was their second wish as well. It will be noted that the Holy Qur'ān, rather than give a straightforward command to fight in this verse, has elected to use the words: مَا لَكُمْ لَا تُقَاتِلُوْنَ فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ (What has happened to you that you do not fight in the way of Allah?). Here the hint given is that fighting and Jihād is a natural duty under such conditions, not doing which is certainly far from a reasonable man.

Praying to Allah is the panacea for all hardships

The words of prayer in verse 75: يَقُوْلُوْنَ رَبَّنَا اَخْرِجْنَا tell us that one of the reasons why the command to fight came was the prayer made by these weak Muslim men and women. Allah Almighty responded to their prayer and commanded Muslims to wage Jihād against their oppressors and which put an end to their hardships immediately.

The objectives of war

Verse 76 says that اَلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا يُقَاتِلُوْنَ فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ :'those who believe fight in the way of Allah and those who disbelieve fight in the way of Ṭāghūt.' This clearly shows that the purpose for which a believer strives is to see that the Divine Law becomes operative in this world and that the authority of Allah Almighty reigns supreme, because He is the master of all. He has created the universe in His infinite wisdom, and His Law is based on pure justice, and when the rule of justice is established, there will be peace which sustains. In order that there be peace in the world, it is necessary that it is run under a law which is the Law of the Lord. So, when a true and perfect Muslim fights in a war, this is the purpose before him.

But, in sharp contrast to him, disbelievers seek to spread the message of *kufr*, give it the widest possible currency, and work to bring

about the ascendency of disbelief. They are all too eager to see that satanic powers rule the world so that everything that constitutes *kufr* and *shirk* can be enforced in the universal order giving it the sheen and glamour of something seemingly positive. Since *kufr* and *shirk* are the ways of the Satan, therefore, the disbelievers help the Satan in doing his job.

The guile of Satan is feeble

The last sentence of verse 76: إِنَّ كَيْدَ الشَّيْطٰنِ كَانَ ضَعِيفًا assures that the deceptive plans made by Satan are weak and insubstantial because of which he cannot harm or hurt true Muslims in any way whatsoever. So, Muslims should really not demur when it comes to fighting against the friends of Satan, that is, against the disbelievers. This is because their helper is none other but Allah Himself and, with Allah on their side, the game plan of the Satan is not going to work for them.

And this is what happened at the battle of Badr. There was the Satan by the side of the disbelievers, dishing out his tall claims before them, telling them; لَا غَالِبَ لَكُمُ الْيَوْمَ - 'this day, nobody is going to over-power you' - because: إِنِّي جَارٌ لَّكُمْ (I am your helper by your side. I shall be there with my armies to support you.) When the actual fighting began, he did advance with his army, but no sooner did he notice that angels have arrived to help Muslims, all plans he had made were frustrated and he took to his heels, saying to his disbelieving accomplices: إِنِّي بَرِيءٌ مِّنكُمْ إِنِّي أَرَىٰ مَا لَا تَرَوْنَ إِنِّي أَخَافُ اللَّهَ ۚ وَاللَّهُ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ (I bear no responsibility for you. I see what you do not see. I fear Allah for Allah is severe when punishing.) (Maẓharī)

That the guile of Satan has been called 'feeble' in this verse (76) is not an isolated statement. There emerge two conditions right from this verse which provide us with an exception. The first one is that the person against whom the Satan is trying his guile must be a Muslim. Then, the second one is that the effort being made by that Muslim must be for the pleasure of Allah alone. In other words, he may not have any selfish motive behind his effort. The first condition emerges from the words: الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا (those who believe)and the second from: يُقَاتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ (fight in the way of Allah). If either of the two conditions stop existing, then, it is not necessary that the guile of the Satan remains 'feeble' against him.

Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ has said: 'When you see Satan, do not think twice. Attack him.' After that, he recited this very verse: إِنَّ كَيْدَ الشَّيْطٰنِ كَانَ ضَعِيفًا (No doubt, the guile of Satan is feeble.) (al-Qurṭubī)

Verses 77 - 79

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ قِيلَ لَهُمْ كُفُّوا أَيْدِيَكُمْ وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلٰوةَ
وَآتُوا الزَّكٰوةَ فَلَمَّا كُتِبَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقِتَالُ إِذَا فَرِيقٌ مِّنْهُمْ
يَخْشَوْنَ النَّاسَ كَخَشْيَةِ اللّٰهِ أَوْ أَشَدَّ خَشْيَةً وَقَالُوا رَبَّنَا لِمَ
كَتَبْتَ عَلَيْنَا الْقِتَالَ لَوْلَا أَخَّرْتَنَا إِلَى أَجَلٍ قَرِيبٍ قُلْ مَتَاعُ
الدُّنْيَا قَلِيلٌ وَالْآخِرَةُ خَيْرٌ لِّمَنِ اتَّقَى وَلَا تُظْلَمُونَ
فَتِيلًا ﴿٧٧﴾ أَيْنَ مَا تَكُونُوا يُدْرِكْكُمُ الْمَوْتُ وَلَوْ كُنْتُمْ فِي بُرُوجٍ
مُّشَيَّدَةٍ وَإِنْ تُصِبْهُمْ حَسَنَةٌ يَّقُولُوا هٰذِهِ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللّٰهِ وَإِنْ
تُصِبْهُمْ سَيِّئَةٌ يَّقُولُوا هٰذِهِ مِنْ عِنْدِكَ قُلْ كُلٌّ مِّنْ عِنْدِ اللّٰهِ
فَمَالِ هٰؤُلَاءِ الْقَوْمِ لَا يَكَادُونَ يَفْقَهُونَ حَدِيثًا ﴿٧٨﴾ مَا
أَصَابَكَ مِنْ حَسَنَةٍ فَمِنَ اللّٰهِ وَمَا أَصَابَكَ مِنْ سَيِّئَةٍ فَمِنْ
نَّفْسِكَ وَأَرْسَلْنٰكَ لِلنَّاسِ رَسُولًا وَكَفٰى بِاللّٰهِ شَهِيدًا ﴿٧٩﴾

Have you not seen those to whom it was said, "Hold your hands (from fighting) and be steadfast in Ṣalāh and pay Zakāh." However, when fighting is enjoined upon them, surprisingly, a group from them starts fearing people as one would fear Allah, or fearing even more. And they say, "Our Lord, why have you enjoined fighting upon us? Would you have not spared us for a little more time?" Say, "The enjoyment of the world is but a little, and the Hereafter is far better for the one who fears Allah. And you shall not be wronged even to the measure of a fibre. [77] **Wherever you will be, Death will overtake you, even though you are in fortified castles." And if some good comes to them, they say, "This is from Allah." And if some evil visits them, they say, "This is from you." Say, "All is from Allah." So, what is wrong with these people, they do not seem to under-**

stand a word? [78] **Whatever good comes to you, it is from Allah and whatever evil visits you it comes from your own selves. And We have sent you to be a Messenger for the people. And Allah is enough to be a witness.** [79]

Commentary

The Background of Revelation

Verse 77 beginning with the words: أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ قِيلَ لَهُمْ كُفُّوا أَيْدِيَكُمْ (Have you not seen those to whom it was said, "Hold your hands {from fighting}...) was revealed in a particular background. Before their migration from Makkah, Muslims were regularly persecuted by disbelievers. Harassed Muslims used to visit the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم complaining to him about the high-handed treatment meted out to them and asking for his permission to fight back in self-defence and put an end to the Kāfir reign of terror. He advised patience holding them back from direct confrontation on the plea that he has not been commanded to fight, in fact, he told them, he has been commanded to stay patient, forgo and forgive. He also told them to continue observing the instructions of *ṣalāh* and *zakāh*, already given to them, consistently and devotedly. He impressed upon them the virtues of the present pattern of their behaviour, even though the odds were against them, for the simple reason that , unless man is conditioned to fight against his own evil desires in obedience to the command of Allah and is also used to bearing physical pain and financial sacrifice, he finds joining Jihād and sacrificing his life very difficult a proposition. This was an advice Muslims had accepted. But when they migrated from Makkah to Madīnah, and Jihād was enjoined upon them, they should have been pleased with it, as it was something that had answered their own prayers. But, there were some infirm Muslims around who started fearing the prospects of a fight against the disbelievers as one would fear the punishment of Allah, rather more than this. Caught in that peevish state of mind, they started pining for a little more respite, a possible postponement of the command to fight to some later day which may have given them more time to live and to enjoy. Thereupon, these verses were revealed. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī)

Why did the Muslims wish for the postponement of Jihād

The wish for respite expressed by Muslims following the command

to fight was not an objection to the command of Jihād. It was, rather, a benign and subtle complaint. The reason may lie in the usual pattern of human psyche in such situations. When hurt and harassed to the extreme, one is very likely to flare up and go for a revenge. But, once man is used to a life of physical comfort and peace, he does not feel like going out to fight. This is no more than a simple human reaction. So, these Muslims, while they were in Makkah, all fed up with pains inflicted on them by the disbelievers at that time, were naturally looking forward most eagerly for the command of Jihād to come. But, when they reached Madīnah, they found peace and comfort which they had missed for long. Now the command to fight, when it came in that state of theirs, found them no more moved by their old fire, therefore, they simply wished that it would have been better if the call for Jihād was just not there at that point of time. Now, to take this 'wish' as an 'objection' and to attribute an act of sin to those Muslims is not correct. However, this explanation is limited to the assumption that they had pronounced this complaint verbally. But, if they said nothing verbally, and it was simply a thought which crossed their mind, then, thoughts in the mind and doubts in the heart are happenings which the Sharī'ah of Islam simply does not count as sins. Here, both probabilities exist. Then, the word, "*Qālū*" (They say) in the verse should not lead one to presume that they had said this verbally, for it may be taken to mean that they may have said it within their hearts. (abridged from Bayān al-Qur'ān by Maulānā Thānavī). According to some commentators, in which case, no explanation is called for. (Tafsīr Kabīr).

Self-correction should precede collective reform

In أَقِيمُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكٰوةَ (verse 77), Allah Almighty has first mentioned the command to establish the prescribed prayers and pay the fixed zakāh which are the medium of self-correction. The command of Jihād comes after that, which is the medium of political and collective correction, that is, through it the forces of coercion and injustice are eliminated as a result of which peace prevails in the country. From here we learn that, well before worrying about correcting others, one should start correcting himself. So, seen from the angle of a relative degree of importance, the first command is an absolute individual obligation (*farḍ al-'ayn*) while the second is an obligation which, if performed by some, will absolve others (*farḍ al-kifāyah*). This highlights the impor-

tance of self-correction and makes its precedence obvious enough (Maẓharī).

The difference between the blessings of the present world and those of the Hereafter

In this verse, the blessings of the Hereafter have been declared to be more bountiful and certainly better as compared with the blessings of the present world of our experience. Some reasons why this is so are given below:

1. The blessings of the present world are few, while the blessings of the Hereafter are many.
2. The blessings of *dunyā* (the present world) are perishable, while the blessings of *Ākhirah* (Hereafter) are eternal.
3. The blessings of *dunyā* are laced with all sorts of botherations, while the blessings of *Ākhirah* are free of such impurities.
4. The acquisition of the blessings of *dunyā* is not certain, while the blessings of *Ākhirah* will most certainly reach everyone who is God-fearing (*Muttaqī*: the observer of *Taqwā*). (al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr)

وَلَاخَيْرَ فِى الدُّنْيَا لِمَنْ لَمْ يَكُنْ لَّهُ مِنَ اللّٰهِ فِىْ دَارِ الْمَقَامِ نَصِيْبُ

فَإِنْ تَعْجِبُ الدُّنْيَا رِجَالًا فَإِنَّهَا مَتَاعٌ قَلِيْلٌ وَالزَّوَالُ قَرِيْبُ

There is no gain in *dunyā* for the one who has no share in the eternal abode from Allah. Still, if *dunyā* does attract some people, then (beware) it is a short-lived enjoyment and its decline is near (that is, once eyes close in death, the *Ākhirah* is there to see).

There is no escape from death:

In أَيْنَ مَا تَكُوْنُوْا يُدْرِكْكُّمُ الْمَوْتُ (verse 78) (Wherever you will be death will overtake you), Allah Almighty removes any doubts the deserters from Jihād may entertain. They think that, perhaps by dodging Jihād, they can also dodge death. Therefore, it was said that there will be a day of death, a day when it must come, no matter where you are; it will come exactly where you are. When this is settled, there is no sense in backing out from Jihād.

Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Kathīr, the famous commentator, while discussing this verse, has reported a lesson-filled event on the authority of Mujāhid as narrated by Ibn Jarīr and Ibn Abī Ḥātim. He recounts the event

concerning a woman from an earlier community. Soon after her pregnancy matured, she gave birth to a child and sent her servant out to fetch some fire. As soon as the servant stepped out of the door of the house, he saw a man appear suddenly before him. He asked: 'What baby this woman has given birth to?' The servant told him that it was a baby girl. Thereupon, the man said: 'You must remember that this girl will sleep with a hundred men and will finally die through a spider.' Hearing this, the servant returned immediate with a knife and slit the abdomen of that girl open. Taking her to be dead, he ran away from the house. But, a little later, the mother of the girl stitched up the skin of the abdomen slit by the servant. Then came the day when this girl grew to be young and beautiful, so beautiful that she was considered to be the jewel of the city.

As for the servant, he escaped overseas where he stayed for a long time and, in the meantime, assembled a fortune for himself. When he planned to get married, he returned to his old city. There he met an old woman. He told her that he was looking for a bride, but that he was eager to marry the most beautiful woman in town. The old woman told him about a certain girl whose beauty was unmatched in the whole city and insisted that he should marry her. The servant, now a rich man, made efforts and finally got married to that girl. While getting to know each other, the girl asked him as to who he was and where did he live. He told her: 'Actually, I belong to this very city, but I had to run away because I had slit the abdomen of a girl open.' Then he narrated the whole event. Hearing this, she said: 'I am that girl.' She showed him her abdomen. The cut mark was still there. Seeing this, the man said: 'If you are the same woman, I disclose two things about you. The first one is that you will sleep with a hundred men.' Thereupon, the woman confessed that she has done that, but she could not remember the number. The man said: 'The number is hundred. And the second one is that you will die through a spider.'

The man who was now rich had a grand palace built for her which was absolutely free of any spider webs. On a certain day, while they were resting in their room in the palace, they noticed a spider on the wall. The woman said: 'Is this the spider you scare me of?' The man said: 'Yes.' Thereupon, she sprang up from the bed saying: 'Then, this

one I am going to kill right now.' Having said that, she downed the spider on the floor and trampled her dead under her feet.

The spider died all right but the poison from her infected her feet and nails and the message of death became all too clear for her. (Ibn Kathīr)

Here was a woman living in a palace, new and very clean, but she died through a spider all of a sudden. Compare her case with many others who spent a life-time in fighting battles yet death did not come to them there. Think of Sayyidnā Khālid ibn Walīd رضی اللہ عنہ , the famous soldier and general of Islam known by his oft-repeated title, *Saifullāh* - the Sword of Allah. He had a burning desire to die as martyr in the way of Allah. So, he kept fighting all his life, engaging in one Jihād after another and longing to become a Shahīd. He killed thousands of disbelievers on the battlefields, living dangerously and daringly against many a trial, always praying and pleading that he be saved from the fate of dying in bed like women and praying and pleding that Allah favour him with the death of a fearless soldier in the heat of some Jihād. But, as decreed by Allah, he finally died nowhere else but on his own bed in the house.

The lesson is that the arrangement of life and death stays in the hands of our creator whose decisions are final. There is nothing we can do about it. It is He who can, if He wills, give us death on a luxury bed at the hands of a spider; or, if He elects to save us, he can keep us alive amid swinging swords or zooming fires.

Building secure houses is not against *Tawakkul*

Let us now consider: وَلَوْ كُنْتُمْ فِيْ بُرُوْجٍ مُّشَيَّدَةٍ in verse 78. It says: 'Wherever you will be Death will overtake you, even though you are in fortified castles.' This tells us that building a good and strong house to live with ensured security of person and things is not contrary to the dictates of *tawakkul* or trust in Allah and that it is not against the rules of Sharī'ah either. (Qurṭubī)

A Blessing comes only by the grace of Allah

In مَآ اَصَابَكَ مِنْ حَسَنَةٍ فَمِنَ اللّٰهِ (verse 79), translated as: 'whatever good comes to you is from Allah,' the word, '*hasanatin*' means 'blessing' (Mazharī). The verse points out to the fact that any blessing which

reaches man, any good that comes to him, does not get to him as a matter of his right. This is, on the contrary, nothing but the grace of Allah Almighty, His '*faḍl*', in common Islamic terminology. No matter how much, he devotes to the many acts of worship he is obligated with, man cannot claim to deserve that blessing on the basis of his deeds alone. The reason is simple, because the very ability to engage in acts of worship comes from none but Allah Himself, which is known as the *Taufīq* of Allah. Then the blessings of Allah are countless, how could they be 'procured' by limited acts of worship and other expressions of obedience to His commands? Specially so, when whatever we do in the name of the worship of Allah is hardly worthy of the supreme mastery and power of our Lord, the Lord of the universe of our experience and the Lord of universes beyond? This point has been made more succinctly in a *ḥadīth*, where the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been reported to have said:

ما احديدخل الجنة الا برحمة الله، قيل: ولا أنت؟ قال: ولا أنا

'No one shall enter Paradise unless it be with the mercy of Allah.' The narrator asked: 'Not you either?' He said, 'Yes. Not me either.'

Calamities are the result of misdeeds

In وَمَآ اَصَابَكَ مِنْ سَيِّئَةٍ فَمِنْ نَّفْسِكَ (verse 79), translated as: 'and whatever evil visits you, it comes from your own selves,' the word, '*sayyi'atun*' means '*muṣībah*', evil, hardship, (misfortune, calamity, disaster) according to Maẓharī.

Although, calamities are created by Allah, yet their cause lies nowhere else but in the very misdeeds of man himself. Now if this man is a disbeliever, a *kāfir*, the evil that hits him in this mortal world is only an ordinary sample of the ultimate punishment, the punishment of the world-to-come, which is much much more than the worldly punishment. And if this man is a believer, a *mu'min*, all his misfortunes become an expiation (*kaffārah*) of his sins in that case, and thereby become the very cause of his salvation in the Hereafter. Thus, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said in a ḥadīth:

ما من مصيبة تصيب المسلم الا كفر الله بها عنه حتى الشوكة يشاكها

"No evil ever touches a Muslim, but it becomes a source of

forgiveness for him - even the pinch of a thorn in his feet." (Mazharī from Tirmidhī)

In another ḥadīth, reported by Abū Mūsā رضى الله عنه, he said:

عن ابى موسى ان رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم قال لا تصيب عبدا نكبة فما فوقها وما دونها الا بذنب وما يعفو اكثر

"No hardship befalls a servant of Allah, be it light or tough, but it is always due to his sin - and the sins Allah forgives (without afflicting with a calamity) are much more." (Mazharī, from Tirmidhī)

The Prophet of Islam: His Prophethood is Universal

The words: وَاَرْسَلْنٰكَ لِلنَّاسِ رَسُوْلًا (And We have sent you to be a Messenger for the people) appearing at the end of verse 79 prove that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been sent as a Messenger of Allah (*Rasūl*) for all peoples of the world. He was not simply a Messenger for Arabs alone.

In fact, his prophethood is universal, open to all human beings of this entire universe, whether they are present at this point of time, or may come to be there right through the *Qiyāmah*, the fateful Last Day of this universe of ours. (Mazharī)

Verse 80

مَنْ يُّطِعِ الرَّسُوْلَ فَقَدْ اَطَاعَ اللّٰهَ ۚ وَمَنْ تَوَلّٰى فَمَآ اَرْسَلْنٰكَ عَلَيْهِمْ حَفِيْظًا ﴿٨٠﴾

Whoever obeys the Messenger obeys Allah and whoever turns away, then, We did not send you to stand guard over them. [80]

Previous to this, there was the affirmation of prophethood. Now comes the statement which establishes the right of prophethood - it calls for compulsory obedience. In case hostile people refuse to obey, there are words of comfort for the noble Prophet of Islam who has been absolved of any responsibility for their lack of obedience.

The opening statement in the verse presents a very important principle bearing on the authority of the blessed *Rasūl* of Allah. Here, the obedience to the Prophet has been equated with obedience to

Allah. From this it follows that whoever disobeys the Prophet, invariably disobeys the command of Allah. Since, obedience to Allah is obligatory, even rationally - so, obedience to the Prophet also turns out to be equally obligatory. As for the person who, inspite of the truth being all too manifest, elects to turn his back and reject the message given by the Prophet, then, the Prophet has been asked not to worry about the callous behaviour of such people because Allah has not sent His Prophet to stand guard over their behaviour for which he is not responsible. It means that the Prophet of Allah is not duty-bound to see that they do not indulge in disbelief. He is simply not charged with the mission of stopping them from disbelieving. His mission is to deliver the Message. Once this is done, his duty as a Prophet stands fulfilled. After that, if they still go about disbelieving, it is their business for which he is in no way accountable. (Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thānavī, Bayān al-Qur'ān)

Verses 81 - 82

وَيَقُوْلُوْنَ طَاعَةٌ فَاِذَا بَرَزُوْا مِنْ عِنْدِكَ بَيَّتَ طَآئِفَةٌ مِّنْهُمْ غَيْرَ
الَّذِيْ تَقُوْلُ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ يَكْتُبُ مَا يُبَيِّتُوْنَ ۚ فَاَعْرِضْ عَنْهُمْ وَتَوَكَّلْ
عَلَى اللّٰهِ ؕ وَكَفٰى بِاللّٰهِ وَكِيْلًا ﴿۸۱﴾ اَفَلَا يَتَدَبَّرُوْنَ الْقُرْاٰنَ ؕ وَلَوْ
كَانَ مِنْ عِنْدِ غَيْرِ اللّٰهِ لَوَجَدُوْا فِيْهِ اخْتِلَافًا كَثِيْرًا ﴿۸۲﴾

And they say, "Obedience (we observe)." But when they go away from you, a group of them conspires at night contrary to what they say. And Allah records what they conspire. So ignore them and put your trust in Allah. And Allah is enough to trust in. [81]

Do they not, then, ponder in the Qur'ān? Had it been from someone other than Allah, they would have found in it a great deal of contradiction. [82]

That obedience to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is obligatory was the subject of verse 80. Here, the Prophet was comforted in case the disbelievers rejected his message. Now comes a mention of some hypocrites who used to wriggle out of this obligation.

Commentary

The first verse (81) which begins with the words: وَيَقُوْلُوْنَ طَاعَةٌ فَاِذَا بَرَزُوْا مِنْ

عِنۡدِكَ بَيَّتَ طَآئِفَةٌ مِّنۡهُمۡ غَيۡرَ الَّذِیۡ تَقُوۡلُ (And they say, "Obedience (we observe)..." condemns those who practice a policy of double-dealing. They will say something verbally and have something else hidden in their hearts. Once this is established, what should be the attitude of the Messenger of Allah towards such a set of people? The latter part of the verse carries a special instruction about it.

An important instruction for a leader

The verse: فَاَعۡرِضۡ عَنۡهُمۡ وَتَوَكَّلۡ عَلَى اللّٰهِ وَكَفٰى بِاللّٰهِ وَكِيۡلًا refers to the hypocrites who, when they came face to face with the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, said that they were quite obedient to him and had accepted what he had commanded them with. But, when they left his company, they got together and conspired as to how they could disobey him. This duplicity of theirs caused great pain to him. Thereupon, Allah Almighty instructed him to ignore them and continue with his mission placing his trust in Allah because Allah is all-sufficient for him.

From here we know that one who leads people has to go through all sorts of hardships. People tend to level absurd allegations against him. Then, there are enemies in the garb of friendship and trust around him. Despite the presence of all such obstacles, this leader must display determination and steadfastness and devote to his mission with full trust in Allah. If his objective and orientation is right, he will, *Inshallah*, succeed.

Deliberation in the Qur'ān

Verse 82 begins with: اَفَلَا يَتَدَبَّرُوۡنَ الۡقُرۡاٰنَ (Do they not, then, ponder in the Qur'ān?) Through this verse, Allah Almighty invites people to deliberate in the Qur'ān. Noteworthy here are a few points. First of all, the words used are: اَفَلَا يَتَدَبَّرُوۡنَ (Do they not, then, ponder ...) and not اَفَلَا يَقۡرَءُوۡنَ (Do they not, then, recite.) Obviously, there is a delicate hint being given through this verse which is suggesting that if they were to look at the Qur'ān deeply, they would find no discrepancy in its words and meanings. This sense can come only through the use of the word, '*tadabbur*' which means to ponder or deliberate. A plain recitation which is devoid of deliberation and deep thinking may lead one to start seeing contradictions which really do not exist there.

The second point which emerges from this verse is that the Qur'ān

itself demands that every human being should ponder over its meanings. Therefore, to suppose that pondering in the Qur'ān is the exclusive domain of its highest and the ablest exponents (the Imāms and Mujtahids) is not correct. However, it is also true that the levels of deliberation will be different in terms of the different levels of knowledge and understanding. The deliberation of the great exponents will deduce the solution of thousands of problems from every single verse, while the deliberation of a common scholar will reach only as far as the very comprehension of such problems and their solutions. When common people recite the Qur'ān and deliberate in its meanings through the medium of its translation and explanation in their own language, this will impress upon their hearts the greatness of Allah Almighty, develop love for Him and implant there a concern for the life-to-come, the *Ākhirah*. This is the master key to success. However, in order that common people stay safe from falling into doubts and misunderstandings, it is better that they should study the Qur'ān, lesson by lesson, under the guidance of an *'ālim*. If this cannot be done, take to the study of some authentic and reliable *tafsīr* (commentary, exegesis). Should some doubt arise during the course of such study, the wiser course is not to go for a solution on the basis of personal opinion, instead of which, one should consult expert scholars.

No group or individual holds monopoly on the exegesis and explication of Qur'ān and Sunnah, but there are conditions for it

The verse under reference tells us that everyone has the right to ponder in the Qur'ān. But, as we have said earlier, the levels of '*tadabbur*' (deliberation) are different. Each one is governed by a separate rule. Let us take the serious deliberation of a great exponent, the '*tadabbur*' of a master *mujtahid*. Through this methodology, solutions to problems are deduced from the Holy Qur'ān at the highest level. For this purpose, it is necessary that one who is pondering in the Qur'ān, should first acquaint himself with the basic rules employed in such deduction in order that the results he achieves are correct and sound. In case, he fails to arm himself with the basic postulates to begin with, or in case, his education and training in this discipline remain faulty; and in case, he does not ultimately possess the qualifications and conditions that must be found in a *mujtahid* exponent,

then, it is obvious that he would come up with the wrong set of results. Now, this is a situation in which better-equipped scholars may challenge and contradict them, something they would be doing rightfully.

Think of a person who has never even walked the corridors of a medical college, yet he starts objecting as to why only trained doctors have been allowed to hold a monopoly of all medical treatment in the country, and why is it that he as a human being has not been allowed to exercise the right of treating patients?

Or, there may be a person who gags his reason and starts challenging as to why all contracts to build canals, bridges and dams are given to expert engineers only? Since, he is a citizen of the country, therefore, he too is fully deserving of discharging this service!

Or, there may be that person, devoid of reason who stands up raising an objection as to why legal experts alone have been allowed to hold monopoly over the interpretation and application of the law of the land, while he too, being sane and adult, can do the same job? Obviously, to that person, it would be said that, no doubt he has a right to do all such things as a citizen of the country, but it is also true that one has to undergo the difficult stages of education, training and experience for years and years together in order to imbibe the ability to accomplish such tasks. This is not what one can do all by himself. One has to assimilate an enormous body of arts and sciences under expert teachers on his way to established degrees and subsequent recognition in the field. If this person is ready to first go through this grind, and come out successful therefrom, then, he too could certainly become an arm of law in these fields.

But, when this analogy is applied to the interpretation and application of Qur'ān and Sunnah, a highly intricate and very delicate job indeed, we come across a barrage of taunts and accusations that the '*ulama* (religious scholars) hold a monopoly over the job! Is it that the interpretation and application of Qur'ān and Sunnah requires no ability, no qualification? Are we saying that, in this wide world of ours, the knowledge of the Qur'ān and Sunnah alone has come to be so orphaned, so heirless that everyone can start getting away with his own interpretation and application as a matter of right, even though the claimant has not spent even a few months devoted to learning the

great discipline of Qur'ān and Sunnah? This is terrible.

The proof of Qiyās

It is from this verse that we also come to know an important rule, that is, when we do not find an explicit statement in the Qur'ān and Sunnah about a certain problem, we should make the best of efforts to find a solution by a serious deliberation <u>within</u> these. This method is technically known as Qiyās or analogical deduction (Qurtubī).

"A great deal of contradiction"

The last sentence of verse 82: وَلَوْ كَانَ مِنْ عِنْدِ غَيْرِ اللّٰهِ لَوَجَدُوْا فِيْهِ اخْتِلَافًا كَثِيْرًا translated as 'Had it been from someone other than Allah, they would have found in it a great deal of contradiction' needs some explanation. Here, 'a great deal of contradiction' means: Had there been a contradiction in one subject, the contradiction in many subjects would obviously have become a great deal of contradiction (Bayān al-Qur'ān). But, the truth of the matter is that there is just no contradiction anywhere in the Qur'ān. So, this is the word of Allah Almighty. This perfect uniformity cannot be found in the word of man. Then there is its unmatched eloquence which never tapers. It talks about the Oneness of Allah and the disbelief of men and lays down rules for the lawful and the unlawful, yet there is no inconsistency, no discrepancy in the process. It offers information about the unseen but there is not one bit of information which does not match with reality. Then there is the very order of the Qur'ān which retains the quality of its diction all along, never ever touching a pitch which is low. The speech or writing of man is affected by circumstances. It varies with peace and distraction and happiness and sorrow. But, Qur'ān is free of all sorts of incongruities and contradictions - actually, it is beyond any such thing. And this is a clear proof of its being the word of God.

Verse 83

وَإِذَا جَآءَهُمْ أَمْرٌ مِّنَ الْأَمْنِ أَوِ الْخَوْفِ أَذَاعُوْا بِهٖ ۖ وَلَوْ رَدُّوْهُ
إِلَى الرَّسُوْلِ وَإِلٰٓى أُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْهُمْ لَعَلِمَهُ الَّذِيْنَ
يَسْتَنْبِطُوْنَهٗ مِنْهُمْ ۗ وَلَوْلَا فَضْلُ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهٗ لَاتَّبَعْتُمُ
الشَّيْطٰنَ إِلَّا قَلِيْلًا ﴿٨٣﴾

And when there comes to them a matter about peace or fear, they spread it. Had they referred it to the Messenger and to those in authority among them, those of them who were to investigate it would have certainly known it (the truth of the matter). But for Allah's grace upon you, and mercy, you would have followed the Satan, save a few. [83]

Commentary

The Background of Revelation

According to Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās, Ḍaḥḥāk and Abū Mu'ādh رضی اللہ عنہم, the verse: وَإِذَا جَآءَهُمْ أَمْرٌ مِّنَ الْأَمْنِ أَوِ الْخَوْفِ أَذَاعُوا بِهِ (And when there comes to them a matter about peace or fear, they spread it) was revealed about the hypocrites; and, according to Sayyidnā Ḥasan and many others, this verse was revealed about weak Muslims (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī).

After having reported events relating to this verse, the famous commentator, Ibn Kathīr has stressed on the importance of referring to the ḥadīth of Sayyidnā 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb رضی اللہ عنہ while considering the background in which this verse was revealed. According to this, when Sayyidnā 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ heard that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has divorced his wives, he left his house heading for the Masjid. While still at its door steps, he heard that people inside there were also talking about the matter. Seeing this, he said that this was something which must first be investigated. So, he went to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and asked him if he had divorced his wives. He said, "No." Sayyidnā 'Umar says, "After having found out the truth of the matter, I returned to the Masjid and, standing on the door, I made an announcement that the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم has not divorced his wives. Whatever you are saying is wrong." Thereupon, the verse: وَإِذَا جَآءَهُمْ أَمْرٌ was revealed (Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr).

To spread rumours, without verification

This verse tells us that hearsay should not be repeated without prior investigation into its credibility. Thus, in a ḥadīth, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: كفى بالمرء كذبا أن يحدث بكل ماسمع. It means that 'for a man to be a liar, it is enough that he repeats everything he hears without first verifying its truth'. In another ḥadīth, he said: من حدث بحديث وهو يرى انه كذب فهو احد الكاذبين. It means: 'Whoever relates something he thinks is a lie, then, he too is one of the two liars (Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr).

Who are "those in authority"?

Let us now determine the meaning of two expressions appearing in the sentence: وَلَوْ رَدُّوهُ إِلَى الرَّسُولِ وَإِلَىٰ أُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْهُمْ لَعَلِمَهُ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَنْبِطُونَهُ مِنْهُمْ which has been translated as: 'and had they referred it to the Messenger and to those in authority among them, those of them who were to investigate it would have certainly known it (the truth of the matter).' Literally, the later word, "*istinbāt*" here refers to the act of drawing out water from the depth of a well. When a well is dug, the water that oozes out first is called *mustambat* water. But, the usage in this context means to get to the bottom of something and find out the truth of the matter. (Qurtubī)

As for the correct signification of the expression: اولو الامر (those in authority), positions taken by scholars vary. Sayyidnā Ḥasan, Qatādah and Ibn Abī Lailā, may Allah have mercy on them, say that this refers to Muslim scholars and jurists (علماء و فقہاء). Al-Suddī says that it means rulers and officials (امراء و حکام). After reporting both these statements, Abū Bakr al-Jaṣṣāṣ takes a general view and maintains that the expression means both, which is the correct approach, because أُولِي الْأَمْرِ applies to all of them. However, some scholars doubt the possibility that أُولِي الْأَمْرِ could refer to Muslim jurists (فقہاء) because أُولِي الْأَمْرِ, in its literal sense, means people whose orders are carried out administratively. Obviously, this is not what the Muslim jurists (فقہاء) do. Let us look at the reality of the thing. The implementation of authority takes two forms. Firstly, it can be done by using force, coercion and oppression. This is something which can only be done by those in authority. The second from of obedience to authority comes from reliance and trust, and that stands reposed in revered Muslim jurists (فقہاء) only, a demonstration of which has been all too visible in the lives of Muslims in general in all ages where the general body of Muslims have been, by their own free will and choice, taking the decision and authority of religious scholars (علماء) as the mandatory mode of action in all matters of religion. Then, according to the percepts of the Sharī'ah, obedience to rules set by them is obligatory (*wājib*) on them as such. So, given this reason, the application of the term أُولِي الْأَمْرِ (those in authority) to them as well is correct. (al-Aḥkām al-Qur'ān by al-Jaṣṣāṣ)

Details on this subject have already appeared under the commen-

tary on verse: أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَأُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنكُمْ (Say, "Obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you - 4:59).

Qiyās and Ijtihād in modern problems

From this verse, we find out that rulings on problems not specifically mentioned in the authoritative texts (technically, *naṣṣ*) of the Holy Qur'ān or Sunnah will be deduced in the light of the Qur'ān using the principle of Ijtihād and Qiyās because this verse carries the command to turn to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم for the resolution of any new problems - if he is present at that time. And if he is not present, the command is to turn to religious scholars and jurists of the Muslim community (علماء و فقہاء), because they have the required ability to extract and formulate religious injunctions from the authoritative texts of the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth.

Points of guidance which emerge from the statement made above are:

1. In the absence of *naṣṣ*, explicit textual authority from the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth, the course of action is to turn to Fuqahā, and 'Ulamā' (Muslim jurists and scholars).

2. The injunctions given by Allah are of two kinds. Some of them are there in the form of explicit textual imperatives (*manṣūṣ* and *ṣarīḥ*). Then, there are some others which are not explicit and carry meanings which are hidden in the depths of the verses as willed by Allah in his infinite wisdom.

3. It is the duty of the 'Ulamā' (religious scholars) to extract and formulate such meanings through the established methodology of Ijtihād and Qiyās.

4. For the great masses of Muslims, it is necessary that they should follow the guidance given by the 'Ulamā' in such problems. (Aḥkām al-Qur'ān by al-Jaṣṣāṣ)

The Prophetic function of deducing injunctions

The statement: لَعَلِمَهُ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَنبِطُونَهُ مِنْهُمْ : 'those of them who were to investigate it would have certainly known it (the truth of the matter),' shows that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم too was obligated to the percept of extracting, formulating and reasoning out with proofs all injunctions that needed to be so handled. This is so because earlier in

the verse the command was to turn towards two sources. Firstly, it was to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and secondly, to those in authority (أُولِي الْأَمْرِ). After that it was said: لَعَلِمَهُ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَنْبِطُونَهُ (those of them who were to investigate it would have certainly known it.) And this injunction is general which covers both of the two parties cited above. So, it proves that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was also obligated with the function of deducing injunctions. (Aḥkām al-Qur'ān by al-Jaṣṣāṣ)

An important note

If this verse makes someone suspect or assume that it has no relation with deducing injunctions of Sharī'ah, it does not say anymore than give an instruction to people that they should not indulge in rumour-mongering in situations of peace and fear when faced with an enemy, instead of which, one should turn to the knowledgeable and trustworthy and act in accordance with the advice they give after due deliberation and that it has no connection with juristic or new legal problems.

In order to answer this doubt, it can be said that the sentence: وَإِذَا جَآءَهُمْ أَمْرٌ مِّنَ الْأَمْنِ أَوِ الْخَوْفِ (And when there comes to them a matter about peace or fear) in this verse makes no mention of an enemy. So, the state of peace and fear is universal. The way it relates to an enemy, so it does with day to day problems as well. This is so because the appearance of a problem before a commoner, a problem about which no textual authority relating to its being lawful or unlawful exists, throws him into a fix and he cannot decide which side to take as both sides hold the probability of gain and loss. The smartest way out devised by the Sharī'ah of Islam in this impasse is that one should turn to those capable of extracting and formulating injunctions and act in accordance with the via media laid out by them. (Abridged from Aḥkām al-Qur'ān by al-Jaṣṣāṣ)

The outcome of Ijtihād

The legal ruling extracted by Muslim jurists (فقہاء) from the texts through Istinbāt (and Ijtihād) cannot categorically be declared as being the absolute truth in the sight of Allah. Instead of that, the probability always exists that this ruling might as well turn out to be not true. But, of course, what one gains out of it is positive, overwhelming and weightier opinion about its being true and correct, something which is

good enough to act upon. (al-Aḥkām al-Qur'ān by al-Jaṣṣāṣ and Tafsīr Kabīr)

Verse 84

فَقَاتِلْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ ۚ لَا تُكَلَّفُ إِلَّا نَفْسَكَ ۚ وَحَرِّضِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ۖ عَسَى اللَّهُ أَنْ يَكُفَّ بَأْسَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا ۚ وَاللَّهُ أَشَدُّ بَأْسًا وَأَشَدُّ تَنْكِيلًا ﴿٨٤﴾

So, fight in the way of Allah. You are not responsible but for yourself. And persuade the believers. It is likely that Allah will prevent the mischief of those who disbelieve. And Allah is the strongest in war and the mightiest in punishing. [84]

Commentary

The Background of Revelation

When the battle of Uḥud came to pass in the month of Shawwāl, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم , in keeping with the promised date set by the disbelievers, started preparations to confront them at Badr in the month of Dhi-Qa'dah (historians identify which as the minor Badr). At that time, some people betrayed a little hesitation in going along because of having been recently wounded, while some others did so because of rumours. Thereupon, Allah Almighty revealed this verse where guidance has been given to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم that he should ignore the infirm and the scared among Muslims and show no hesitation in marching on to Jihād even if it has to be all alone, for Allah is his helper. With this guidance on hand, he went ahead to Badr Minor with seventy Companions as promised to Abū Sufyān after the battle of Uḥud. There it so happened that Allah Almighty put awe and fear in the hearts of Abū Sufyān and his disbelieving accomplices from the tribe of Quraysh. Not one of them showed up for the fight as a result of which they turned out to be false in their solemn promise. Thus, as the text says, Allah Almighty prevented the mischief of the disbelievers and the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم returned back with his companions safely (Qurṭubī & Maẓharī).

The Eloquent style of Qur'ānic Injunctions

The verse begins with the command to the Holy Prophet ﷺ : 'So, fight in the way of Allah'. This direction is addressed to the Holy

Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم which implies that he should fight alone - irrespective of whether anyone is ready to go with him. But, in the second sentence following immediately, it was also said that he should not shelve or surrender the mission of inducing other Muslims to join in the Jihād. However, if they remain unresponsive even after the effort of persuasion, the mission of the prophet has been accomplished who, from that point onwards, will not be responsible for what they do.

In addition to this, the possible danger in having to fight alone has been removed by saying: 'It is likely that Allah will prevent the mischief of those who disbelieve': May be He puts awe in their hearts and they stand subdued and he succeeds all alone. How could such success become possible? The proof follows immediately when it is declared that he is being helped and supported by Allah Almighty whose strength and might at war far exceeds those of such disbelievers, therefore, it is certain that success has got to be his. After that, coupled with this statement about the Divine strength in war, the text relates how Allah is the mightiest in punishing. This punishment may be on the Day of Judgement as obvious, or may come right here in this mortal world as stated by some commentators. Whichever the case, 'Allah is the strongest in war and the mightiest in punishing.'

Verses 85 - 87

مَنْ يَّشْفَعْ شَفَاعَةً حَسَنَةً يَّكُنْ لَّهٗ نَصِيْبٌ مِّنْهَا ۚ وَمَنْ يَّشْفَعْ
شَفَاعَةً سَيِّئَةً يَّكُنْ لَّهٗ كِفْلٌ مِّنْهَا ۗ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ
مُّقِيْتًا ﴿٨٥﴾ وَاِذَا حُيِّيْتُمْ بِتَحِيَّةٍ فَحَيُّوْا بِاَحْسَنَ مِنْهَآ
اَوْ رُدُّوْهَا ۗ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ حَسِيْبًا ﴿٨٦﴾ اَللّٰهُ لَآ اِلٰهَ
اِلَّا هُوَ ۗ لَيَجْمَعَنَّكُمْ اِلٰى يَوْمِ الْقِيٰمَةِ لَا رَيْبَ فِيْهِ ۗ وَمَنْ اَصْدَقُ
مِنَ اللّٰهِ حَدِيْثًا ﴿٨٧﴾

And whoever makes a good recommendation, there shall be for him a share from it (in the Hereafter). And whoever makes a bad recommendation, there shall be for him a share from it. And Allah is powerful over everything. [85]

And when you are greeted with a salutation, greet with

one better than it, or return the same. Surely, Allah is the reckoner over everything. [86]

Allah: There is no god but He. He shall, certainly, gather you towards the Day of Doom. There is no doubt about it. And who is more true, than Allah, in his word? [87]

Commentary

The Reality of Recommendation and its rules and kinds

Verse 85 beginning with مَنْ يَّشْفَعْ شَفَاعَةً حَسَنَةً points out to the act of شَفَاعَة: '*shafā'ah*' (recommendation) under two heads, the good and the bad, a division which helps clarify its nature. The added message here is that no recommendation is universally good or bad. What has to be realized is that one who makes a good recommendation shall have a share in the reward it brings and whoever makes a bad recommendation shall have a share in the punishment it brings. It will be noted that the word نَصِيْبٌ : '*nasībun*' (share) has been used with شَفَاعَةً حَسَنَةً: '*shafā'atan hasanatan*' (good recommendation) while the word كِفْلٌ: '*kiflun*' (share) has been used with شَفَاعَةً سَيِّئَةً: '*shafā'atan sayyiatan*' (bad recommendation). Lexically, both words carry the some meaning, that is, a share of something. But, in common usage, '*nasīb*' refers to a good share while the word '*kifl*' is, more than often, used to identify a bad share, although there are occasions when '*kifl*' is also used for a good share as well, like "كِفْلَيْنِ مِنْ رَّحْمَتِهٖ" (two shares from His mercy) in the Holy Qur'ān.

The literal meaning of '*shafā'ah*' is to meet, to join; or, cause to meet or join. This is why the word '*shaf*'' means an even number, a pair or couple in Arabic, the antonym of which is referred to as '*witr*' or odd. So, speaking literally, '*shafā'ah*' means the coupling of one's strength with that of a weak seeker of justice and thus making it stronger in appeal. Or, in other words, joining in with some helpless solitary person and thus giving him the strength of a pair.

From here we find out that for recommendation to be fair and permissible the condition is that the claim of the person being recommended be true and permissible. Then, in the second place, it may be that a person cannot carry his claim all by himself to those in authority because of his weakness or lack of resource, something which you may do for him. Thus, we can clearly see that making a

recommendation for what is not true and rightful, or forcibly influencing others to accept it, is included under bad recommendation. Consequently, we also know that pressure or authority exerted through the channels of one's connections and influence is also not permissible because it is an act of injustice. Therefore, this too will be counted as 'bad recommendation'.

To sum up the meaning of the verse, it can be said that one who makes a recommendation following the permissible way for someone's permissible claim or job, will have a share in its reward. Similarly, one who makes a recommendation for something impermissible or uses an impermissible method to do so, will have a share in its punishment.

Having a share means that, should the person to whom the recommendation has been made do the needful for the one oppressed or deprived, the person making the recommendation will be rewarded very much like the official who has listened to the recommendation and removed the injustice or deprivation cited therein. Similarly, one who makes a recommendation for something impermissible will obviously become a sinner - we already know that the reward or punishment of the maker of a recommendation does not depend on his recommendation becoming effective and fruitful; he will get his share in any case.

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said: اَلدَّالُّ عَلَى الْخَيْرِ كَفَاعِلِهٖ that is, a person who brings someone around to do a good deed gets a reward similar to that received by the doer of the good deed. In another ḥadīth from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضى الله عنه appearing in Ibn Mājah, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been reported to have said:

من اعان على قتل مؤمن بشطر كلمة لقى الله مكتوب بين عينيه "ائس من رحمة الله".

Whoever helps in the killing of a Muslim even by part of a word will face Allah with a sign written (on his forehead) in between his eyes: (This man is) "deprived from the mercy of Allah)".

From here we find out that prompting someone to do a good deed is a good deed in its own right and carries an identical reward for having done it and, by the same token, prompting someone to do an evil deed

or to indulge in an act of sin is also a sin of equal gravity.

Towards the end of verse 85, it was said: وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَىْءٍ مُّقِيْتًا which has been translated as: 'And Allah is powerful over everything'. Lexically, the word, مقيت: '*muqīt*' means powerful as well as the observer and the dispenser of sustenance. All these three meanings can be deduced from this statement. In the first sense, the meaning would be that Allah is powerful over everything. For Him the rewarding and punishing of the one who makes a recommendation and the one who executes it is not difficult. Taken in the second sense, the meaning would be that Allah is ever-present observing everything. He knows best who is making a recommendation with what intention, such as, is it being done sincerely to help out some brother-in-faith just for the sake of Allah and His pleasure, or the purpose is to make him a target of self-interest and get some advantage out of him as a bribe. Taken in the third sense, the meaning would be that Allah Almighty is Himself responsible for the dispensation of sustenance; whatever He has written for someone has got to reach him. A recommendation by someone is not going to leave Him choiceless. In fact, He will bestow on whomsoever He wills as much of sustenance as He wills. However, the maker of a good recommendation gets a reward for free because he has extended a helping hand to the helpless.

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said:

كان الله فى عون عبده ما دام فى عون اخيه

> Allah keeps helping His servant as long as he keeps helping his brother.

It is on this basis that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said as reported in a ḥadīth of Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī:

اشفعوا فلتوجروا ويقضى الله على لسان نبيّه ماشاءَ

> Recommend and be rewarded and then be pleased with whatever Allah decides through His prophet.

While this hadīth declares recommendation as a source of Divine reward, it also defines the limit of such recommendation. If a weak person cannot carry his problem onward to a higher authority, or is incapable of explaining correctly what he needs, then, you do it for him. Further from that what happens is none of your business. The

recommendation may be accepted or it may be rejected. What a person needs to be done may be done, or it may remain undone. These are possibilities and you should not interfere in the process of decision-making in any manner whatsoever. Should the final outcome turn out to be against the recommendation made, you should never end up being displeased or disgusted. The last sentence of the hadīth quoted above: يقضى الله على لسان نبيّه ماشاء means just this. Also, due to this reason, the words of the Holy Qur'ān carry a hint in this direction, that is, the reward or punishment on the making of a recommendation does not depend on a successful recommendation. Such reward or punishment relates to the initial act of making a recommendation in the absolute sense. If you make a good recommendation, you become deserving of a reward and if you make a bad recommendation, you become liable to punishment - the approval or rejection of your recommendation does not matter.

The commentators of Tafsīr al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ and Bayān al-Qur'ān and several others take the word مِنْهَا: *'minhā'* in verse 85 as indicative of cause and see a hint in this direction. Al-Tafsīr al-Maẓharī reports from the great exegete Mujāhid that one who makes a recommendation will get a reward for having made it, even though the recommendation may not have been accepted. Then, this approach is not specially related to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in person. Any recommendation made to any other human being should be bound by this principle - make the recommendation and be done with it. Moving any further to compel the addressee of the recommendation to accept it is not right and fair. This is illustrated by an incident in the blessed life of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. He made a recommendation to Sayyidah Barīrah, a bondwoman freed by Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها that her husband Mughīth from whom she had dissolved her marriage was really disturbed emotionally because he loved her, so she may think of remarrying him. Sayyidah Barīrah رضى الله عنها said: '*Yā Rasūlallah*, if this is your command, I am all for it; but, if this is a recommendation, then, I just do not feel like accepting it at all.' The Holy Prophet ﷺ said: 'Yes, this is a recommendation and not a command.' Sayyidah Barīrah رضى الله عنها, may Allah be pleased with her, knew that the Holy Prophet ﷺ will not feel bad about what is against the set rule. Therefore, in all frankness, she said: 'Then I do not accept

this recommendation.' He took it very gracefully and let her stay the way she was.

This was the whole reality behind the act of recommendation, something which brought merit and reward under the legal code of Islam. But, in our day, people have so mutilated the whole thing that no '*shafā'ah*' or recommendation remains what it was intended to be. What we witness now is a pushy exercise of cashing on the basis of connections, acquaintance and VIP influence for which relentless pressure is exerted. This is why people become angry when their recommendation is not accepted. Some would even stoop down to open hostility, although pressurizing a person to a limit where he is compelled to do something against his conscience and good discretion is included under compulsion and coercion and is a grave sin. This is just like someone forcibly usurping the claim, right or property belonging to the other person. Wasn't that person free and independent as established by the law of Islam? Here comes someone who deprives him of his freedom of action by pressing him to do something against his free will and conscience. This would be like stealing from someone and giving it to a destitute in order to fulfil his need.

Receiving Payment against a Recommendation is Bribe and is Absolutely Forbidden

A recommendation against which anything is taken in return becomes a bribe. The ḥadith declares it to be an ill-gotten property which is *ḥarām* (forbidden). This includes all kinds of bribe whether money-oriented or job-related, for instance, harnessing someone to do a personal chore in return for having done something for him.

According to Tafsīr al-Kashshāf, a good recommendation is that which aims at fulfilling the right of a Muslim, or to bring some permissible benefit to him, or to shield him from harm or loss. Furthermore, this act of recommendation should not be for any worldly expediency. It should be aimed at helping a weak person exclusively for seeking the pleasure of Allah. Then no bribe, financial or physical, should be taken against this recommendation and that this recommendation should also not be about things not permissible. In addition to all that, the purpose of this recommendation should not be to seek pardon for a proven crime the punishment for which stands fixed in the Holy

Qur'ān.

It appears in Tafsīr Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ and al-Maẓharī that praying to Allah that the need of some Muslim be fulfilled is also included under 'good recommendation', the reward for which reaches the maker of the prayer as well. According to a ḥadith, when someone prays for the good of his brother-in-faith, the angel says: ولك بمثل, which means - 'may Allah fulfill your need as well.'

Salām and Islām : The Bliss of Muslim Greeting

In verse 86 which begins with the words: وَإِذَا حُيِّيْتُمْ بِتَحِيَّةٍ فَحَيُّوا بِأَحْسَنَ مِنْهَا, Allah Almighty tells us the etiquette of offering and returning greetings known as Salām among Muslims.

Lexically, تحية: '*Taḥiyyah*' means saying حَيَّاكَ اللّٰهُ :'*Ḥayyākallāh*', that is, 'may Allah keep you alive'. In pre-Islam Arabia, when people met, they used to greet each other by saying '*Ḥayyākallāh*' or '*An'amallāhu bika 'aynan*' or '*An'im sabāhan*' or other expression of this nature. When Islam came, it changed this style of greeting and replaced it with a standard form of greeting which is السلام عليكم: '*As-Salāmu 'Alaikum*' Commonly, though incompletely, translated in English as 'peace be on you', the greeting means: 'May you remain safe from every pain, sorrow and distress.'

In Aḥkām al-Qur'ān, Ibn 'Arabī says: The word Salām is one of the good names of Allah Almighty and '*As-Salāmu Alaikum*' means اَللّٰهُ رَقِيْبٌ عَلَيْكَ that is, Allah Almighty is your guardian and caretaker.

The Islamic greeting is unique

All civilized people around the world have the custom of saying something to express mutual familiarity or affection when they meet each other. If compared with these broadmindedly, the Islamic form of greeting will stand out significantly for its comprehensiveness because it does not simply restrict itself to an expression of affection alone. It rather combines it with the fulfillment of the demands of love and affection. It means that we pray to Allah that He keep you safe against all calamities and sorrows. Then, this is no bland prayer for long life alone as was the way with pre-Islam Arabs. Instead of that, here we have a prayer for good life, that is, a life which is secure against all calamities and sorrows. Along with it, the Islamic *salām* is an expres-

sion of the reality of our relation with Allah Almighty - that we, the greeter and the greeted, are all dependent on Allah Almighty needing Him all the time and no one can bring any benefit to someone else without His will and leave. Taken in this sense, this form of greeting is an act of worship in its own right and, quite functionally indeed, a medium of reminding a brother-in-faith of Allah Almighty, the object of his obedience and love.

Staying with this line of presentation, let us imagine a person praying to Allah that his acquaintance remain safe against all calamities and sorrows. When doing so, is it not that he is sort of making a promise as well that the person being greeted is safe against his own hands and tongue. In other words, he is saying that he, in his place, is the guardian and protector of the person's life, property and honour.

In Aḥkām al-Qur'ān, Ibn al-'Arabī has reported the following saying of Imām Ibn 'Uyaynah:

أَتَدْرِيْ مَا السَّلَامُ؟ يَقُوْلُ أَنْتَ اٰمِنٌ مِّنِّيْ

> Do you know what *salām* is? The greeter by *salām* says: 'You are safe from me.'

To sum up, it can be said that this Islamic form of greeting has a universal comprehensiveness as it is a medium of the remembrance of Allah while reminding the person greeted of Him. It is a vehicle of expressing love and affection for a brother-in-faith and, in fact, a wonderful prayer for him. Then, it also carries a commitment that the greeted will in no way face harm or discomfort from the greeter as it appears is a sound ḥadīth where the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said:

اَلْمُسْلِمُ مَنْ سَلِمَ الْمُسْلِمُوْنَ مِنْ لِّسَانِهٖ وَيَدِهٖ

> A Muslim is the one from whom all Muslims remain safe - (safe) from his tongue and (safe) from his hands. (Tirmidhī, Kitabul-'Īmān)

At this point one may fondly wish that Muslims would not utter the words of this greeting as some sort of habitual custom which commonly prevails among other people of the world. How beneficial it would be if this greeting is offered out of a full understanding of its reality which, perhaps, may turn out to be enough for the reform of

whole community. This is the reason why the Holy Prophet ﷺ laid great emphasis on popularizing the practice of Muslims in greeting each other with salām, and he identified it as the best of deeds and took time to explain its merits, graces, blessings and rewards. In a ḥadīth of Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim narrated by Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضى الله عنه, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been reported to have said:

"You cannot enter Paradise until you are a believer and your belief cannot be complete until you love each other. I tell you something which, if you put it in practice, will establish bonds of love among you all, and that is: Make salām a common practice among you which should include every Muslim, whether an acquaintance or a stranger."

Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar رضى الله عنه says that someone asked the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم : 'Out of the practices of Islam which is the worthiest?' He said: 'Feed people and spread the practice of salām, whether you know or do not know a person.' (Bukhārī and Muslim)

The Musnad of Aḥmad, Tirmidhī and Abū Dāwūd report from Sayyidnā Abū Umāmah رضى الله عنه that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: 'Nearest to Allah is the person who is the first one to offer salām.'

A ḥadīth from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd رضى الله عنه appearing in Musnad al-Bazzar and al-Mu'jim al-Kabīr of al-Ṭabarānī reports that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: 'Salām is one of the names of Allah Almighty with which He has blessed the people of the earth. So, make salām a common practice among you because, when a Muslim goes to a gathering of people and offers his salām to them, he is blessed with a station of distinction in the sight of Allah Almighty as he reminded everyone of Salām, that is, reminded everyone of Allah Almighty. If people in the gathering do not return his greeting, others will respond who are better than the people of this gathering, that is, the angels of Allah Almighty.'

In another ḥadīth from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضى الله عنه the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is reported to have said: 'A big miser is the man who acts miserly in offering salām. (Ṭabarānī, al-Mu'jim al-Kabīr)

The effect that those teachings of the Holy Prophet ﷺ had on his noble Companions can be gauged from a narration about Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar رضى الله عنه who would frequently go to the bazar

just for the single purpose of having a chance to meet any Muslim there in the hope of offering salām to him and thus become deserving of the reward of an act of worship. Incidentally, he never intended to buy or sell anything while there. This narration from Sayyidnā Ṭufayl ibn Ubayy ibn Ka'b رضی اللہ عنہ appears in Mu'aṭṭā' of Imām Mālik.

Verse 4:86 of the Holy Qur'ān which says: 'And when you are greeted with a salutation, greet with one better than it, or return the same', was explained by the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم through his own action in the following manner. Once someone came to the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم and said: '*As-Salamu 'Alaikum Yā Rasūlallāh*' (peace be on you, O Messenger of Allah). While returning the greeting, he added a word and said: '*Wa 'Alaikumus-Salām wa Raḥmatullāh* (And peace be on you, and the mercy of Allah). Then someone else came and offered his salām using the following words: '*As-Salāmu 'Alaika Yā Rasūlallāh wa Raḥmatullāh.*' In response, he added yet another word and said: '*Wa 'Alaikumus-Salām wa Raḥmatullāhi wa Barakātuh* (And peace be on you too, and the mercy of Allah, and His blessings). Then came a third person. He combined all three salutations in his initial salām and greeted him by saying the whole thing, that is: '*As-Salāmu 'Alaik Yā Rasūlallāh wa Raḥmatullāhi wa Barakātuh.*' In response, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said only one word '*Wa 'Alaik*' (and on you). Disappointed in his heart, he said: 'Yā Rasūlallāh, ransomed be my parents for you, you said many words of prayer while returning the greeting of those who came before me. But, when I greeted you with all those words, you limited your response to '*wa 'alaik*' (and on you).' He said: 'You left nothing for me to add in the response! Since you used up all those words in your initial salām, I found it sufficient to return your greeting on the principle of like for like in accordance with the teaching of the Qur'ān.' This narration has been reported by Ibn Jarīr and Ibn Abī Ḥātim with different chains of authorities.

There are three things we find out from this ḥadīth: Words appearing in the verse under comment mean that a salām offered should be returned by adding more words to it. If someone says *As-salāmu 'Alaikum* (peace be on you), you respond by saying *Wa 'Alaikumus-Salām wa Raḥmatullāh* (And peace be on you, and the

mercy of Allah). If he says *As-Salāmu 'Alaikum wa Raḥmatullāh* (peace be on you, and the mercy of Allah), then, in response, you say *Wa 'Alaikumus-Salām wa Raḥmatullahī wa Barakātuh* (And peace be on you, and the mercy of Allah, and His blessings).

2. This addition of words is restricted to three words only as a *masnūn* act, that is, conforming to the blessed practice of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم . Going beyond that is not *masnūn*. The logic behind it is obvious. The occasion for salām requires that the verbal exchange be brief. Any excess in this connection which interferes with ongoing business or which becomes heavy on the listener is not appropriate. Therefore, when the person visiting the Holy Prophet ﷺ combined all three words in his very initial salām, he elected to abstain from any further addition of words. This was further explained by Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه by saying that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم stopped the man who went beyond the limit of the three words with the following statement : إِنَّ السَّلَامَ قَدِ انْتَهٰى إِلَى الْبَرَكَةِ (Maẓharī from al-Baghawī). It means that salām ends at the word, *barakah*. Saying anything beyond that was not the practice of the blessed Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم . (Ibn Kathīr)

3. If someone makes his salām with three words spoken at the same time, returning it with only one word will be correct. That too comes under the principle of like for like and is sufficient in obedience to the Qur'ānic command أَوْ رُدُّوهَا (or return the same) as the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has, in this ḥadīth, considered a one-word response as sufficient. (Tafsīr Maẓharī)

In summation, we can say that it is obligatory on a Muslim to return the salām offered to him. If he fails to do so without any valid excuse admitted by the Sharī'ah of Islam, he will become a sinner. However, he has the option to choose the mode. He can either respond with words better than those used in offering the salām; or, the response could be in identical words.

It will be noticed that this verse very clearly states that returning a salām is obligatory but it is not explicit on the nature of offering a salām initially. However, in the Qur'ānic expression إِذَا حُيِّيتُمْ (And when you are greeted ..) there does lie a hint pointing towards this rule of conduct. That this statement is in the passive voice without identi-

fying the subject precisely could be suggestive of salām being something all Muslims already do habitually and commonly.

The Musnad of Aḥmad, al-Tirmidhī and Abū Dāwūd report that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: 'Nearest to Allah is the person who is the first to offer salām.' So, from the emphasis on salām and its many merits you have learnt from the teachings of the Holy Prophet ﷺ cited earlier, we get to understand that offering the initial salām has also been emphasized as part of the practice of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. According to Tafsīr al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ, the initial salām is actually a *sunnah mu'akkadah* (emphasized practice of the Prophet of Islam) as held by the majority of 'Ulama. And Ḥasan al-Baṣrī رحمه الله said: 'السلام تطوع والرد فريضة', that is, 'the initial salām is voluntary while returning it is an obligation.'

Some more detailed explanations of this Qur'ānic injunctions about salām and its answer have been given by the Holy Prophet ﷺ which the reader may wish to know briefly. According to a ḥadīth in al-Bukhārī and Muslim, the person riding should himself offer salām to the person walking; and the person walking should offer salām to the person sitting; and a small group of persons walking near a larger group should be the first to offer salām.

According to a ḥadīth in Tirmidhī, when a person enters his house, he should offer salām to the members of his family as this act of grace will bring blessings for him as well as for his family.

According to a ḥadīth in Abū Dāwūd, when one meets a Muslim more than once, he should offer salām every time; and the way offering salām is *masnūn* (a requirement of *sunnah*) at the time of the initial meeting, so it is at the time of seeking leave when offering salām is in line with the practice of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, and a source of reward as well. This rule of guidance appears in Tirmidhī and Abū Dāwūd as narrated by Sayyidnā Qatādah and Abū Hurairah رضى الله عنه.

Now a note of caution about the rule: It is obligatory to answer salām - however, there are certain exceptions to it. For instance, if someone says salām to a person who is offering ṣalāh, an answer is not obligatory. Indeed, it is a spoiler of ṣalāh. Similarly, a person may be delivering a religious sermon, or is busy in reciting the Holy Qur'ān, or is calling the *adhān* or *iqāmah*, or is teaching religious texts, or is busy

with his human compulsions - in all such conditions, even offering the initial salām is not permissible, and he is not responsible for answering it as a matter of obligation either.

Towards the end of verse 86, it was said: إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ حَسِيبًا (Surely, Allah is the Reckoner over everything). It means that with Allah rests the reckoning of everything which includes all human and Islamic rights such as salām and its answer. These too will have to be accounted for before Allah Almighty.

After that comes verse 87 اللَّهُ لَا إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ لَيَجْمَعَنَّكُمْ إِلَىٰ يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ which means that there is no object worthy of worship other than Allah. So, it exhorts: Believe in Him as the only object of your worship and whatever you do let that be with the intention of an act of worship or *'ibādah* before Him. He will gather everyone on the Day of Qiyāmah, the fateful Day of Doom, in which there is no doubt. That will be the Day when He will give everyone the return for whatever deeds he will come up with the promise that Qiyāmah will come and the news that there will be reward and punishment at that time is all true. This is true because this 'news' of what will happen is given by Allah, وَمَنْ أَصْدَقُ مِنَ اللَّهِ حَدِيثًا - and whose word can be more true than that of Allah?

Verses 88 - 91

فَمَا لَكُمْ فِي الْمُنٰفِقِيْنَ فِئَتَيْنِ وَاللّٰهُ اَرْكَسَهُمْ بِمَا كَسَبُوْا ط
اَتُرِيْدُوْنَ اَنْ تَهْدُوْا مَنْ اَضَلَّ اللّٰهُ ط وَمَنْ يُّضْلِلِ اللّٰهُ فَلَنْ تَجِدَ لَهٗ
سَبِيْلًا ﴿٨٨﴾ وَدُّوْا لَوْ تَكْفُرُوْنَ كَمَا كَفَرُوْا فَتَكُوْنُوْنَ سَوَآءً فَلَا
تَتَّخِذُوْا مِنْهُمْ اَوْلِيَآءَ حَتّٰى يُهَاجِرُوْا فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ ط فَاِنْ
تَوَلَّوْا فَخُذُوْهُمْ وَاقْتُلُوْهُمْ حَيْثُ وَجَدْتُّمُوْهُمْ ص وَلَا تَتَّخِذُوْا مِنْهُمْ
وَلِيًّا وَّ لَا نَصِيْرًا ﴿٨٩﴾ اِلَّا الَّذِيْنَ يَصِلُوْنَ اِلٰى قَوْمٍ بَيْنَكُمْ
وَبَيْنَهُمْ مِّيْثَاقٌ اَوْ جَآءُوْكُمْ حَصِرَتْ صُدُوْرُهُمْ اَنْ يُّقَاتِلُوْكُمْ اَوْ
يُقَاتِلُوْا قَوْمَهُمْ ط وَلَوْ شَآءَ اللّٰهُ لَسَلَّطَهُمْ عَلَيْكُمْ فَلَقٰتَلُوْكُمْ فَاِنِ
اعْتَزَلُوْكُمْ فَلَمْ يُقَاتِلُوْكُمْ وَاَلْقَوْا اِلَيْكُمُ السَّلَمَ فَمَا جَعَلَ اللّٰهُ

لَكُمْ عَلَيْهِمْ سَبِيلًا ﴿٩٠﴾ سَتَجِدُونَ آخَرِينَ يُرِيدُونَ أَنْ يَأْمَنُوكُمْ
وَيَأْمَنُوا قَوْمَهُمْ ط كُلَّمَا رُدُّوا إِلَى الْفِتْنَةِ أُرْكِسُوا فِيهَا ج فَإِنْ لَمْ
يَعْتَزِلُوكُمْ وَيُلْقُوا إِلَيْكُمُ السَّلَمَ وَيَكُفُّوا أَيْدِيَهُمْ فَخُذُوهُمْ
وَاقْتُلُوهُمْ حَيْثُ ثَقِفْتُمُوهُمْ ط وَأُولَٰئِكُمْ جَعَلْنَا لَكُمْ عَلَيْهِمْ
سُلْطَانًا مُبِينًا ﴿٩١﴾

So, what is the matter with you that you have become two groups about the hypocrites, while Allah has upturned them because of what they did. Do you want to guide the one whom Allah has let go astray? And the one whom Allah lets go astray, for him you shall never find a way. [88]

They wish that you should disbelieve, as they have disbelieved, and thus you become all alike. So, do not take friends from among them unless they migrate in the way of Allah. Then, if they turn away, sieze them, and kill them wherever you find them, and do not take from among them a friend or a helper. [89] **Except those who join a group between whom and you there is a treaty, or who come to you their hearts declining to fight you or to fight their people -- And if Allah had so willed, He would have given them power over you, then they would have fought you -- so, if they stay away from you and do not fight you and offer you peace, then Allah has not given you a way against them.** [90]

You will find others who want to be secure from you, and secure from their own people. Whenever they are called back to the mischief, they are thrown into it. So, if they do not stay away from you and do not offer peace to you, and do not restrain their hands, then seize them, and kill them wherever you find them, and against these we have given you an open authority. [91]

Commentary

The verses quoted above describe three groups of people about whom two injunctions have been given. The following narrations clarify events surrounding these groups:

1. 'Abdullāh ibn Ḥāmid has narrated from Mujāhid that some

disbelievers of Makkah came to Madīnah. They pretended to have become Muslims and claimed to have come there as emigrants. Later, they turned into apostates. They went to the Holy Prophet ﷺ , told him about their plan to go to Makkah to buy merchandise from there. Having made their false excuse, they departed for Makkah and never returned. There arose a difference of opinion about their behaviour among the Muslims of Madīnah. Some said that they were believers. It was in verse 88: فَمَا لَكُمْ فِى الْمُنٰفِقِيْنَ فِئَتَيْنِ (So what is the matter with you that you have become two groups about the hypocrites) where Allah Almighty declared that they were disbelievers and should be killed.

Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thānavī has explained the Qur'ānic word, '*munāfiq*' (hypocrite) by saying that they were hypocrites when they claimed to have become Muslims - they had never believed in their hearts. The fact was that hypocrites were not killed because they concealed their inner disbelief. But, the case of these people was different as their apostacy had come out in the open. As for those who took them to be Muslims, they may have, perhaps, taken a benign view of their action under some interpretation. However, this interpretation was based on sheer opinion not supported by any proof from the Sharī'ah. That is why no reliance was placed on it.

2. Ibn Abī Shaybah has narrated from Ḥasan that Surāqah ibn Mālik al-Mudlajī visited the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم after the events of Badr and Uḥud and requested him to make peace with his tribe, Banī Mudlaj. Thereupon, he sent Sayyidnā Khālid رضى الله عنه to them to conclude a peace treaty. The terms of the treaty were as follows:

> "We will not support anyone against the Holy Prophet ﷺ . If the Quraysh become Muslims, We too shall become Muslims. All tribes who enter into alliance with us, they too shall become a party with us in this treaty."

Thereupon, this verse: وَدُّوْا لَوْ تَكْفُرُوْنَ (الى قوله) اِلَّا الَّذِيْنَ يَصِلُوْنَ الخ -- (They wish that you disbelieve like they have disbelieved) was revealed.

3. It has been narrated from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه that the people mentioned in the verse: سَتَجِدُوْنَ اٰخَرِيْنَ (You will find others who want to be secure from you) are those belonging to the tribes of Asad and Ghitfān who, when they came to Madīnah, professed Islam outwardly, but to their own people they would confide that they had

really believed in monkeys and scorpions while before Muslims they would piously declare that they were followers of their faith.

However, Ḍaḥḥāk ascribes this conduct to the tribe of 'Abd al-Dār according to a report from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās. The first and the second narration appears in Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī, while the third narration can be seen in Ma'ālim.

Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thānavī likens the state of those mentioned in the third narration as that of the first one since it proves that they were no Muslims to begin with, therefore, they fall under the injunction governing disbelievers in general, that is, 'do not fight them in the presence of a peace treaty – otherwise, do.' Thus, regarding those mentioned in the first narration, the second verse (89): فَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَخُذُوهُمْ وَاقْتُلُوهُمْ (then if they turn away, sieze them and kill them) carries the injunction that they be arrested and killed, while the statement in the third verse (90): إِلَّا الَّذِينَ يَصِلُونَ (except those who join a group with whom you have a treaty) gives them a clear exemption in the event of peace, a situation which finds mention in the second narration. This exemption has been emphasised once again in فَإِنِ اعْتَزَلُوكُمْ (if they stay away from you) later in the same verse (90).

Regarding those mentioned in the third narration, it has been said in the fourth verse (91): سَتَجِدُونَ اٰخَرِينَ (you will find others ....) which means that should these people refuse to leave you alone and insist on fighting, then do fight against them. From this, it can be deduced that in the event they make peace, there should be no fighting against them. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

In short, the three groups mentioned here are:

1. Those who do not emigrate despite their ability to do so in a period of time when emigration was a pre-requisite of faith in Islam. Or, after having emigrated, they go out of the new abode of Islam (Dār al-Islām) and return to the abode of disbelief (Dār al-Kufr).

2. Those who themselves enter a no-war pact with Muslims or those who join hands with those entering into such a pact.

3. Those who make peace to buy time and once there comes an occasion to fight a war against Muslims, they would readily join the enemy camp throwing all treaty obligations to winds.

The injunction governing the first group is similar to that which governs the disbelievers in general. The second groups is exempted from being arrested and killed. The third group deserves the same punishment as fixed for the first. These verses yield a total of two injunctions, that is, fighting in the absence of peace; and not fighting in the event of peace.

Different forms of Emigration and their Rules

Hijrah (Emigration) mentioned in verse 89 has been taken up in detail under the commentary on verse 100 of Sūrah al-Nisā' which appears a little later. At this point, it is sufficient to know that Emigration from the homeland of Disbelief (Dārul-kufr) was enjoined on all Muslims during the early period of Islam. It is for this reason that Allah Almighty has prohibited treating those who fail to carry out this obligation as Muslims. Consequently, when Makkah was conquered, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم declared: لَا هِجْرَةَ بَعْدَ الْفَتْحِ (There is no Hijrah after the Victory). It means: 'Now that the Conquest of Makkah has made it the Abode of Islam, emigration from there was no more obligatory.' This rule related to the period of time when Emigration was considered to be a pre-condition of anyone's faith. During those days, anyone who did not emigrate despite having the ability to do so was not taken to be a Muslim. But, later on, this injunction was abrogated [1] and now this mode of Emigration has ceased to exist.

There remains, however, another form of Hijrah which has been identified in a ḥadīth of Saḥīḥ al-Bukhārī where it was said: لَا تَنْقَطِعُ الْهِجْرَةُ حَتّٰى تَنْقَطِعَ التَّوْبَةُ. It means that Hijrah (not in the sense of abandoning one's homeland, but in the sense of abandoning one's sins) will continue to exist until there remains the time to repent.

'Allamāh 'Aynī, the commentator of al-Bukhārī has said about this Hijrah: أَنَّ الْمُرَادَ بِالْهِجْرَةِ الْبَاقِيَةِ هِيَ هَجْرُ السَّيِّئَاتِ (This later Hijrah means the abandonment of sins). This subject also finds elucidation in a ḥadīth of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم where he is reported to have said: اَلْمُهَاجِرُ مَنْ هَجَرَ مَا نَهَى اللّٰهُ عَنْهُ It means that a Muhājir (Emigrant) is one who emigrates ('*hajara*': abandon, leave) from everything prohibited by Allah

1. It means that emigration no longer remained a pre-requisite for his being Muslim. However, if a Muslim lives in a non-Muslim country where he cannot fulfill his religious obligations, it is incumbent on him to emigrate if he has the means to do so. (Muḥammad Taqi Usmani)

Almighty (al-Mirqāt, v.1)

The discussion appearing above tells us that, technically, the word, Hijrah is applied in a dual sense:

1. To leave one's homeland in order to save one's faith as was done by the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them all - they left their homeland of Makkah and emigrated to Madīnah and Ethiopia.

2. To leave one's sins.

The words of the verse 89: وَلَا تَتَّخِذُوْا مِنْهُمْ وَلِيًّا وَّلَا نَصِيْرًا (and do not take from them a friend or a helper) tell us that seeking help from disbelievers is forbidden (Ḥarām). Pursuant to this, it appears in a narration that the Anṣārs of Madīnah sought the permission of the Holy Prophet ﷺ to seek help from the Jews to offset disbelievers whereupon he said: اَلْخَبِيْثُ لَا حَاجَةَ لَنَا بِهِمْ (The bad ones! We do not need them). (Maẓharī, v.2)

Verses 92 - 93

وَمَا كَانَ لِمُؤْمِنٍ اَنْ يَّقْتُلَ مُؤْمِنًا اِلَّا خَطَاً ۚ وَمَنْ قَتَلَ مُؤْمِنًا
خَطَاً فَتَحْرِيْرُ رَقَبَةٍ مُّؤْمِنَةٍ وَّدِيَةٌ مُّسَلَّمَةٌ اِلٰٓى اَهْلِهٖٓ اِلَّآ اَنْ
يَّصَّدَّقُوْا ۭ فَاِنْ كَانَ مِنْ قَوْمٍ عَدُوٍّ لَّكُمْ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَتَحْرِيْرُ
رَقَبَةٍ مُّؤْمِنَةٍ ۭ وَاِنْ كَانَ مِنْ قَوْمٍۢ بَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيْنَهُمْ مِّيْثَاقٌ فَدِيَةٌ
مُّسَلَّمَةٌ اِلٰٓى اَهْلِهٖ وَتَحْرِيْرُ رَقَبَةٍ مُّؤْمِنَةٍ ۚ فَمَنْ لَّمْ يَجِدْ فَصِيَامُ
شَهْرَيْنِ مُتَتَابِعَيْنِ ۡ تَوْبَةً مِّنَ اللّٰهِ ۭ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ عَلِيْمًا
حَكِيْمًا ﴿٩٢﴾ وَمَنْ يَّقْتُلْ مُؤْمِنًا مُّتَعَمِّدًا فَجَزَاۗؤُهٗ جَهَنَّمُ خٰلِدًا
فِيْهَا وَغَضِبَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِ وَلَعَنَهٗ وَاَعَدَّ لَهٗ عَذَابًا عَظِيْمًا ﴿٩٣﴾

It is not for a believer to kill any believer, except by mistake. And whoever kills a believer by mistake, then, a believing slave has to be freed and the blood money paid to his family, unless they forgo it.

And if he (the victim) belongs to a people hostile to you and is a believer, then, a believing slave has to be freed.

And if he (the victim) belongs to a people between whom and you there is treaty, then, blood money is to

be paid to his family, and a believing slave to be freed. And whoever does not find one has to fast for two consecutive months. This is a relenting from Allah. And Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise. [92]

And whoever kills a believer deliberately, his reward is *Jahannam* where he shall remain for ever and Allah shall be angry with him and shall cast curse upon him and he has prepared for him a mighty punishment. [93]

Commentary

Sequence of Verses

Linked with earlier verses dealing with fighting and killing, all forms of killing, in the first instance, are eight in number because the person killed is covered by one of the four conditions which follow. Either, he is a Muslim; or, he is a Dhimmī (a free, protected, non-Muslim resident of a Muslim state); or, he is beneficiary of a peace pact and has been assured of the protection of his life, property, honour and religion; or, he is a belligerent disbeliever. Then, killing is of two types: intentional, or accidental. Thus, we see that there are only eight possible forms of killing:

1. The intentional killing of a Muslim.
2. The accidental killing of a Muslim.
3. The intentional killing of a Dhimmī.
4. The accidental killing of a Dhimmī.
5. The intentional killing of a person with whom there was a pact of peace.
6. The accidental killing of a peace pact beneficiary.
7. The intentional killing of a belligerent disbeliever.
8. The accidental killing of a belligerent disbeliever.

Injunctions covering some of these situations have appeared earlier; some find mention later, and some others are contained in Ḥadīth. Thus, the injunction relating to the first situation enforceable in this life, that is, the obligatory duty of taking 'even retaliation' (*qiṣāṣ*) from him finds mention in Sūrh al-Baqarah and the injunction applicable to the Hereafter follows a little later in verse 93 beginning

with: وَمَنْ يَّقْتُلْ (And whoever kills....). The second situation appears in Verse 92 from وَمَا كَانَ لِمُؤْمِنٍ (It is not for a believer to kill any believer) to وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَتَحْرِيْرُ رَقَبَةٍ (and if he i.e., victim was a believer...). The injunction covering the third situation appears in a hadīth from Dārqutnī where the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been reported to have subjected a Muslim to 'even retaliation' (*qiṣāṣ*) to compensate a *Dhimmī* (non-Muslim resident of a Muslim state) (اخرجه الزيلعى فى تخريج الهداية) The injunction for the fourth situation appears also in verse 92: وَإِنْ كَانَ مِنْ قَوْمٍ بَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيْنَهُمْ مِّيْثَاقٌ (and if he is from the people with whom you have a peace treaty). The fifth situation has already been taken up in verse 90 of the previous section under: فَمَا جَعَلَ اللّٰهُ لَكُمْ عَلَيْهِمْ سَبِيْلًا (then Allah has not made it permissible for you). The injunction governing the sixth situation has been mentioned alongwith the one relating to the fourth situation because the peace covenant is general and covers the permanent and the temporary both. Thus, it includes *Dhimmī* and *Musta'min* both,[1] irrespective of their permanent or time-bound guarantee of peace and protection. (Al-durr-al-Mukhtār Kitāb al-diyāt)

The injunction relating to situations 7 and 8 is already evident from the very legalization of Jihād itself which has appeared earlier (86) because belligerent disbelievers are killed intentionally. If killed accidentally, its justification will stand proved in a higher degree. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

Three kinds of homicide and their respective injunctions

1. *Qatl al-'Amad* (Intentional Killing) which is done with obvious intention by a weapon made from iron or is like a steel weapon in its ability to cut off parts, such as, a sharp-edged bamboo or a sharp-edged piece of rock and things like that.

2. *Qatl Shibh al-'Amad* (Quasi-Intentional Killing) which is, no doubt, done intentionally - but, not with a weapon which could cut off parts.

3. *Qatl al-Khaṭā'* (Accidental Killing). It can happen under intention and conjecture when someone aims at a man taking him to be

1. Dhimmi is a non-Muslim person permanently and legally living in an Islamic state while *Musta'min* is a non-Muslim who lawfully enters an Islamic state for temporary stay (Muhammad Taqi Usmani)

land game or belligerent disbeliever. Or, it can happen actually when one did aim at land game but ended up striking a man down. Here, *Khaṭā'* or accident means intentional. So, this covers the second and the third kind both. Both entail the obligation to pay *diyah* (blood money), and sin as well. But, the two kinds do differ in the later two consequences. The *diyah* in the second kind of killing is 100 camels of four types, that is, 25 of each type. The *diyah* of the third kind of killing is also 100 camels, but it has to be of five types, that is, 20 of each type. However, if *diyah* is paid in cash, the amount to be realized is ten thousand *dirham* or one thousand *dinār*. This holds good for both kinds. However, the second kind is more sinful because of the intention of killing while it is lesser in the third kind because it is the result of simple heedlessness (as in Hidāyah). As such, the obligatory nature of تَحْرِيْرُ رَقَبَةٍ (to free a slave) and the word, *taubah* (repentance) in the verse 92 support this position. The fact is that the ground reality of these three kinds is conditioned by Islamic laws as promulgated in the mortal world. As for their being intentional or non-intentional in terms of their being sinful, it depends on the volition of the heart and the intention to commit the act. The punishment due against such sin is known to Allah alone. According to His knowledge these terms, the first kind may become non-intentional; and the second, intentional.

Rulings

1. The amount of *diyah* (blood money) mentioned above applies to a male homicide victim. In case of a woman, it is half of it. (as in Hidāyah).

2. The *diyah* of a Muslim and Dhimmī is equal. The Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم has said: دية كل ذى عهد فى عهده الف دينار (Marāsīl of Abū Dāwūd, as quoted by Hidāyah).

3. *Kaffārah* (expiation) in the form of freeing a slave or fasting has to come from the killer himself. As for *diyah* (blood money), it is the responsibility of those who are his caretakers. In the terminology of the Sharī'ah, they are known as العاقلة : al-'Āqilah, those responsible for paying blood money.

Let there be no doubt at this point as to why the burden of a crime committed by the killer should be transferred to his guardians and supporters while they are innocent. The reason is that the guardians

of the killer are not totally faultless in this case. Their shortcoming is that they did not take necessary steps to stop him from venturing into such gross heedlessness against human life. Moreover, the fear of having to pay blood money, it is likely, will make them take all necessary precautions in the future so that such recklessness does not repeat itself.

4. In the act of freeing a slave (*Kaffārah*: Expiation), a bondman and a bondwoman are equal. The Qur'ānic word *Raqabah*, denoting a slave, is general. However, their physique should be sound and they should not be deformed in any way.

5. The *diyah* of the person killed shall be distributed as part of the inheritance determined by the Sharī'ah. A legal heir who forgives his share will cause the *diyah* to be forgiven upto the limit of his share. If all legal heirs forgive it, the whole *diyah* will stand forgiven.

6. The *diyah* of a person killed who has no legal heir as recognized by the Sharī'ah will be retired to the Bayt al-Māl (State Treasury) because *diyah* is inheritance and inheritance is governed by this very ruling. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

7. As for people bound by a mutual covenant, be they Dhimmīs, free non-Muslim citizens of a Muslim country; or, the Musta'min, (those given guarantee of peace for a temporary period of time) the *diyah* obligatory in their case is valid only when people belonging to that Dhimmī or Musta'min are present. If they have no such people, or such people be Muslims, then, given the fact that a Muslim cannot inherit from a disbeliever, this *diyah*, therefore, shall be deemed as non-existant. Thus, should he be a Dhimmī, his *diyah* shall be reitred into the Bayt al-Māl because the inheritance of a heirless Dhimmī - which includes *diyah* - goes to the Bayt al-Māl (as in al-Durr al-Mukhtār); otherwise, it will not be obligatory (Bayān al-Qur'ān).

8. If continuity is broken in fasting due to sickness or some other reason, then, one will have to fast afresh. But, for a woman, this continuity will not be deemed as broken because of her menstruation.

9. If, for some valid excuse, one does not have the strength to fast, then, he should keep repenting until his strength returns.

10. In intentional killing, there is no provision for this Kaffārah

(expiation); one should repent. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

Verse 94 - 96

يَـٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوٓا إِذَا ضَرَبْتُمْ فِى سَبِيلِ ٱللَّهِ فَتَبَيَّنُوا وَلَا
تَقُولُوا لِمَنْ أَلْقَىٰٓ إِلَيْكُمُ ٱلسَّلَـٰمَ لَسْتَ مُؤْمِنًا ۚ تَبْتَغُونَ عَرَضَ
ٱلْحَيَوٰةِ ٱلدُّنْيَا فَعِندَ ٱللَّهِ مَغَانِمُ كَثِيرَةٌ ۚ كَذَٰلِكَ كُنتُم مِّن قَبْلُ
فَمَنَّ ٱللَّهُ عَلَيْكُمْ فَتَبَيَّنُوٓا ۚ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ
خَبِيرًا ﴿٩٤﴾ لَّا يَسْتَوِى ٱلْقَـٰعِدُونَ مِنَ ٱلْمُؤْمِنِينَ غَيْرُ أُولِى
ٱلضَّرَرِ وَٱلْمُجَـٰهِدُونَ فِى سَبِيلِ ٱللَّهِ بِأَمْوَٰلِهِمْ وَأَنفُسِهِمْ ۚ فَضَّلَ
ٱللَّهُ ٱلْمُجَـٰهِدِينَ بِأَمْوَٰلِهِمْ وَأَنفُسِهِمْ عَلَى ٱلْقَـٰعِدِينَ دَرَجَةً ۚ
وَكُلًّا وَعَدَ ٱللَّهُ ٱلْحُسْنَىٰ ۚ وَفَضَّلَ ٱللَّهُ ٱلْمُجَـٰهِدِينَ عَلَى
ٱلْقَـٰعِدِينَ أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا ﴿٩٥﴾ دَرَجَـٰتٍ مِّنْهُ وَمَغْفِرَةً وَرَحْمَةً ۚ وَكَانَ
ٱللَّهُ غَفُورًا رَّحِيمًا ﴿٩٦﴾

O those who believe, when you go out in the way of Allah, be careful, and do not say, to the one who offers you the *salām*[1] "You are not a believer" seeking goods of the worldly life. So, with Allah there are spoils in abundance. In the same state you were before; then Allah favoured you. So, be careful. Surely, Allah is all-aware of what you do. [94]

Those among the believers who sit back, except the handicapped, are not equal to those who fight in the way of Allah with their riches and their lives. Allah has raised the rank of those, who fight with their riches and their lives over those who sit; and to each Allah has promised good. And Allah has given precedence to those who fight over those who sit in giving them a great reward [95] **-- high ranks from Him and forgiveness and mercy. And Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful.** [96]

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1. Salām: the word prescribed by Islam for greeting, i.e. *Assalamu 'alaiykum...*

Commentary

Sequence of Verses

Stern warning has been given against the killing of a Muslim in previous verses. Now it is being said that the apparent profession of Islam is all that is needed for a Muslim to be regarded as a Muslim obligated to observe the laws of the Sharī'ah. So, it is necessary to abstain from the killing of a person who professes Islam. Furthermore, it is also not permissible to dig deep into his inward state of belief just because of some suspicion and to keep waiting for a definite proof of his certitude in faith in order that Islamic laws can be applied in his case. This is what happened during some battles with disbelievers when some Companions were unable to observe the fine line of distinction in this rule. On those occasions, there were some people who presented themselves as Muslims but some Companions took their profession of Islam as a lie and killed them, taking their belongings as war spoils. Allah Almighty condemned this indiscretionary practice. However, an admonition was considered sufficient and no severe warning was revealed for them against this act because the Companions did not know the rule clearly till that time. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

Signs of Islam are sufficient to identify a Muslim:

In the first of the three verses cited above, the guidance given is that in the case of one who professes to be a Muslim, no Muslim is allowed to interpret his declaration of Islam as hypocrisy, without certain knowledge and proof. This verse (94) was revealed in the background of certain episodes relating to some Companions where they had not taken the correct line of action.

So, it has been reported from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās in Tirmidhī and the Musnad of Aḥmad that a man from the tribe of Banū Sulaym met a group of the noble Companions who were going on a Jihād mission. This man was grazing his goats. He offered salām greetings to the group which was a practical demonstration of his being a Muslim. The Companions thought that this man was just pretending in view of the situation before him. Thus, taking his profession of Islam as a ruse to save his life and property whereby he could get away from them by tricking them with greeting in the Muslim style, they killed him and appropriated the herd of his goats as war

spoils which they took to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. Thereupon, this verse was revealed. It laid down the rule: Do not take anyone who greets you by offering salam in the Islamic manner as a pretender and never assume, without valid proof, that his profession of Islam was a trick and never take possession of his property as spoils. (Ibn Kathir)

There is another narration from Sayyidna 'Abdullah ibn 'Abbas which has been reported by al-Bukhari briefly and by al-Bazzar, in details. According to this narration, the Holy Prophet ﷺ sent out a group of mujahidin which included Sayyidna Miqdad ibn al-Aswad. When they reached the designated spot, everyone present there ran away. The only man left there had a lot of valuable things with him. Facing the Companions, the man recited the *kalimah*: أَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَّا إِلٰهَ إِلَّا اللهُ (I testify that there is no god but Allah). But, Sayyidna Miqdad رضى الله عنه, assuming that the man's heart was not behind his verbal declaration of faith and that he was doing it simply to save his life and property, killed him. One Companion from among the group present admonished him for what he had done: He had killed a person who had testified that there is no god but Allah. He declared that he will make it a point to relate this incident before the Holy Prophet ﷺ when and if he would have the honour of returning to him. Finally, the group returned to Madinah and reported the incident to the Holy Prophet ﷺ who called for Sayyidna Miqdad and gave him a stern warning. He said: 'What would you say on the Day of Doom when the *kalimah* of لَا إِلٰهَ إِلَّا اللهُ will stand as a plaintiff against you?' The verse لَا تَقُوْلُوْا لِمَنْ أَلْقٰى إِلَيْكُمُ السَّلٰمَ لَسْتَ مُؤْمِنًا (do not say to the one who offers you salam, "You are not a believer") was revealed on this occasion.

Other incidents, apart from the two mentioned here, have been reported with reference to this verse, but respected scholars of Tafsir do not admit of any contradiction in these narrations, for these events as a whole could have been the cause of the revelation.

The words of the verse are: أَلْقٰى إِلَيْكُمُ السَّلٰمَ (offer you salam). If the word, salam in the text is taken to mean 'salam' in the technical sense (Muslim greeting or salutation), it applies to the first event more suitably. However, if 'salam' is taken to mean submission or surrender to the will of Allah in the literal sense, then, this meaning applies to both events equally. Therefore, salam in the present textual setting has also

been translated in the sense of submission and obedience to Allah.

It is impermissible to take a decision without investigating into related facts of an event

The first sentence of the verse (94) carries a general rule which must be followed by all Muslims: Let no Muslim do anything summarily as based on guess alone. The words of the verse are: إِذَا ضَرَبْتُمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فَتَبَيَّنُوا (when you go out in the way of Allah, be careful). Acting on conjecture is likely to land one in trouble. The restriction of travel in the verse is there because these events came to pass during the state of travel. Or, it may be because doubts crop up during travel to previously unvisited places as compared with the city of residence where things and people are generally familiar. Otherwise, the basic rule, in travel or while resident, is general, that is reacting to any situation without proper investigation is not permissible. In a hadīth, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said: "To act sensibly is from Allah and to rush through is from Shaytān" (al-Bahr al-Muhīt)

The second sentence: تَبْتَغُونَ عَرَضَ الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا (seeking goods of the worldly life) in verse 94 is a prescription for weakness which caused this false step. The weakness was their desire to acquire worldly wealth through collecting spoils. But, immediately after, it was pointed out that Almighty Allah has set aside many more spoils destined for them. Why, then, should they bother about material gains? By way of further admonition, they were asked to recollect that there were so many among them who would not have dared to come out openly with their faith in Islam. It was only when Allah favoured them that they were delivered from the encirclement of disbelievers and were able to profess Islam openly. Keeping this situation in mind, would it not be possible that the person who is saying لَا إِلٰهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ at the sight of the Muslim army, might really be an adherent of Islam from the early days but was unable to profess it freely fearing reprisals from the disbelievers. When he saw the Muslim army, he lost no time in doing so. If they looked into their own situation, they would realize that there was the time when they had recited the *Kalimah* and had called them Muslims, the Sharī'ah of Islam had never asked them to first prove their being Muslims. There was no such condition. They were never asked to let their hearts be examined. They were not ordered to

produce a proof of their Islam before they could be declared as confirmed Muslims. Quite contrary to all this, the simple recital of the *Kalimah* of Islam: لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا اللّٰهُ مُحَمَّدٌ رَّسُوْلُ اللّٰهِ was considered good enough to recognize them as Muslims. Keeping this in mind, it was their duty that they should now take anyone who recites the *Kalimah* before them as a Muslim.

The meaning of not taking a Muslim to be a Kāfir

From this verse comes the important ruling that anyone who professes Islam and declares that he is a Muslim - by reciting the *Kalimah* or by associating himself with some marked feature of Islam such as the Adhān and the Ṣalāh - should be treated as a Muslim. All Muslims must deal with him as they would do with any other Muslim. They are not supposed to wait and worry about finding out whether such a person has embraced Islam with all his heart or it has been done out of expediency.

In addition to that, this is a case in which even his doings will not serve as the criterion. Suppose, someone skips Ṣalāh, does not fast and is involved with all sorts of sins - still, no one has the right to say that he has gone outside the pale of Islam or to treat him as one would treat a disbeliever. Therefore, the great Imām Abū Ḥanīfah said: لانكفر اهل القبلة بذنب (We do not call 'the people of the Qiblah' Kāfirs because of some sin). Similar statements appear in hadīth narrations also, such as, 'Do not say that 'the people of Qiblah' are Kāfirs, no matter how sinful and evil-doing they may be.'

At this point, there is something everyone should understand and remember, clearly and particularly. This relates to the authority of the Qur'ān and Sunnah from which it is proved that calling or taking someone who calls himself a Muslim to be a Kāfir is not permissible. It clearly means that until such time he says or does something which provides the positive proof of *Kufr* (disbelief), his profession of faith in Islam shall be deemed as sound and he will continue to be taken as a Muslim and, for all practical purposes, he will be dealt with as one would deal with Muslims. No one will have the right to debate what goes on in his heart or how sincere or hypocritical he may or may not be.

But, there may be a person who professes Islam, attests to faith,

yet disgraces himself by uttering words of disbelief or prostrates before an idol or denies an injunction of Islam which is absolute and obvious, or takes to a religious way or mark of disbelievers - such a person will certainly be declared a Kāfir because of his deeds which prove his infidelity. It will be noticed that, the word تَبَيَّنُوْا (be careful or investigate) in the present verse provides a hint to this effect, otherwise, the Jews and the Christians all claimed to be believers. Then, there was Musaylimah, the Liar. He was declared to be a Kāfir with the consensus of Companions, and killed. As for him, he was not only a professor of the Islamic creed but a practicing adherent of Adhān and Ṣalāh as well. In his Adhān, he had the Muezzin say: اَشْهَدُ اَنْ لَّآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا اللّٰهُ (I testify that there is no god but Allah) which was duly followed by اَشْهَدُ اَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا رَّسُوْلُ اللّٰهِ (I testify that Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allah). But, while he did this, he also claimed to be a prophet and a messenger who received revelations. This was an open denial of the binding injunctions of the Qur'ān and Sunnah. It was on this basis that he was declared to be an apostate and a Jihād force was sent against him with the consensus of the Companions.

In short, the correct course of action when faced with this problem is: Take everyone who recites the *Kalimah* and adheres to Islam (*ahl al-Qiblah*: the people of Qiblah) to be a Muslim. Peeking into his heart is not our business. Let Allah be the judge. But, when you see one professing faith yet doing things to the contrary, take him to have become an apostate subject to the condition that such deeds be, absolutely and certainly, contrary to the dictates of Faith and that it admits of no other probability or interpretation.

Finally, we can now see that 'the reciter of the *Kalimah*' (*Kalimah-go*) or *Ahl al-Qiblah* (the people of Qiblah, meaning Muslims who universally turn to the direction of Holy Ka'bah when praying) are technical terms applied solely to one who, after his professing Islam, does nothing by his word and deed which can be classed as infidelity.

Some Injunctions about Jihād

The second verse (95) takes up some injunction related to Jihād. It says that people who do not participate in Jihād without some valid excuse cannot be equal to those who fight in the way of Allah staking everything they have, even their lives. In fact, Almighty Allah has

raised the ranks of those who fight in the way of Allah over those who do not. However, along with this declaration of the precedence of Mujāhidīn, it was also said that Almighty Allah has promised good returns for both groups. Both shall be blessed with Paradise and Allah's forgiveness - the only difference between them will be that of ranking.

According to leading exegetes, this verse tell us that Jihād is *Farḍ 'ala al-Kifāyah* under normal conditions. *Farḍ Kifāyah,* as opposed to *Farḍ 'ala al'Ayn* (an obligation for every individual), is an obligation of sufficiency. It means that should some people fulfill it, the rest of Muslims stand relieved subject to the condition that those engaged in Jihād must be sufficient for that Jihād. If the situation is otherwise, Jihād will become an obligation (*Farḍ 'Ayn*) on all Muslims living in the neighbouring areas who will have to come forward to help the Mujāhidīn.

The Definition of *Farḍ Kifāyah*

In the terminology of the Sharī'ah, *Farḍ 'ala al-Kifāyah* refers to obligations the fulfillment of which is not mandatory on every individual Muslim. Instead, if some fulfill it, that will be good enough. Most activities of a collective nature fall under this category. Teaching of religious sciences and their wider dissemination is also an obligation of this nature - if some people are devoted to the fulfillment of this obligation and their number is fairly sufficient, then, other Muslims are absolved of this duty. But, should it be that just about nobody is discharging this obligation wherever there be the need to do so, then, everyone becomes a sinner.

The Ṣalāh for the deceased, the bathing and shrouding of the body is also a collective obligation, for a brother fulfills the rights of a Muslim brother and this is how it is supposed to be, a requirement of the Islamic law. The making of Masājid and Madāris (mosques and religious schools) and running programmes of public welfare are included under this very injunction, that is, if some Muslims do that, the rest stand absolved of the obligation.

Generally, injunctions related to collective needs have been, of necessity, classed as *Farḍ Kifāyah* by the Sharī'ah of Islam so that all duties can be discharged under the principle of distribution of work. Thus, some people would be engaged in Jihād, others in education and

da'wah activities and still others in attending to various other Islamic or human needs.

The statement وَكُلًّا وَّعَدَ اللّٰهُ الْحُسْنٰى (and to each, Allah has promised good) in this verse gives peace of mind to those who are engaged in religious duties other than Jihād. But, this injunction is operative in normal conditions when the Jihād waged by some people is sufficient for defence against the enemy attack. Should it be that their Jihād needs additional support, Jihād becomes an absolute obligation on neighbouring Muslims in the first instance. If this support too turns out to be still deficient, Jihād becomes an absolute obligation on Muslims living nearby in their proximity. Finally, just in case, they too are unable to meet the challenge from the enemy, the mantle of Jihād duty falls on the shoulders of other Muslims to the limit that there may come a time when every Muslim from the East and the West may have to participate in the Jihād as solemn religious obligation.

The third verse (96) too recounts the same degrees of precedence that the Mujāhidīn have over others.

Ruling

Jihād is not obligatory on the lame, the crippled, the blind, the sick and on others who are excusable under the Islamic law.

Verses 97 - 100

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ تَوَفّٰهُمُ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ ظَالِمِيٓ أَنْفُسِهِمْ قَالُوا فِيمَ كُنْتُمْ
قَالُوا كُنَّا مُسْتَضْعَفِينَ فِي الْأَرْضِ قَالُوٓا أَلَمْ تَكُنْ أَرْضُ
اللّٰهِ وَاسِعَةً فَتُهَاجِرُوا فِيهَا فَأُولٰٓئِكَ مَأْوٰىهُمْ جَهَنَّمُ وَسَآءَتْ
مَصِيرًا ﴿٩٧﴾ إِلَّا الْمُسْتَضْعَفِينَ مِنَ الرِّجَالِ وَالنِّسَآءِ وَالْوِلْدَانِ
لَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ حِيلَةً وَّلَا يَهْتَدُونَ سَبِيلًا ﴿٩٨﴾ فَأُولٰٓئِكَ عَسَى
اللّٰهُ أَنْ يَّعْفُوَ عَنْهُمْ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ عَفُوًّا غَفُورًا ﴿٩٩﴾ وَمَنْ يُّهَاجِرْ
فِي سَبِيلِ اللّٰهِ يَجِدْ فِي الْأَرْضِ مُرٰغَمًا كَثِيرًا وَّسَعَةً وَمَنْ
يَّخْرُجْ مِنْ بَيْتِهِ مُهَاجِرًا إِلَى اللّٰهِ وَرَسُولِهِ ثُمَّ يُدْرِكْهُ الْمَوْتُ
فَقَدْ وَقَعَ أَجْرُهُ عَلَى اللّٰهِ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ غَفُورًا رَّحِيمًا ﴿١٠٠﴾

Those whom the angels take while they had wronged themselves, (to them) the angels said, "What were you (involved) in?" They said, "We were oppressed in the earth." They said, "Was not the earth of Allah wide enough that you might have sought refuge in it?" As for such, their shelter is Jahannam. And it is an evil place to return [97] **- except the oppressed, men and women and children, who cannot manage a device nor can find a way. As for such, it is likely that Allah would pardon them. And Allah is Most-Pardoning, Most-Forgiving.** [99]

And whoever migrates in the way of Allah shall find in the earth many a place to settle and a wide dimension (of resources). And whoever leaves his home migrating for the sake of Allah and His Messenger and death overtakes him, then, his reward is established with Allah. And Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful. [100]

Commentary

The Definition of Hijrah

In the four verses cited above, the merits, blessings and injunctions of Hijrah have been described. Lexically, Hijrah, Hijrān and Hajr mean 'being displeased with something and leaving it'. In common parlance, the leaving of one's home country is known as Hijrah. In the terminology of the Sharī'ah, leaving *Dār al-Kufr* (Homeland of disbelievers) and going to *Dār al-Islam* (Abode of Islam) is called *Hijrah* (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī).

In Sharḥ al-Mishkāh, Mullā 'Alī al-Qārī has said: Leaving a home country for religious reasons is also included under *Hijrah* (Mirqāt, p. 39, v.1).

From the verse ٱلَّذِينَ أُخْرِجُوا۟ مِن دِيَٰرِهِمْ وَأَمْوَٰلِهِمْ (59:8): 'Those who have been driven away from their homes ...' revealed about emigrating Companions, we know if disbelievers of a country forcibly expel Muslims because they are Muslims, this too will be included under *Hijrah*.

From this definition, we learn that Muslims migrating from India to Pakistan who came here out of disgust for *Dār al-Kufr* at their own choice or were driven away by non-Muslims simply because they were Muslims, are all '*Muhājirs*' in the Islamic legal sense. But, those who have moved to benefit from business or employment opportunities are

not entitled to be called '*Muhājir*' in that Islamic legal sense.

Then, there is the ḥadīth from al-Bukhārī and Muslim in which the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم has been reported to have said:

اَلْمُهَاجِرُ مَنْ هَجَرَ مَانَهَى اللّٰهُ عَنْهُ وَرَسُوْلُهٗ

Muhājir is one who leaves everything Allah and His Messenger have prohibited.

The full sense of the saying becomes clear from the first sentence of this very ḥadīth which is as follows:

اَلْمُسْلِمُ مَنْ سَلِمَ الْمُسْلِمُوْنَ مِنْ لِّسَانِهٖ وَيَدِهٖ

A Muslim is the one from whom all Muslims remain safe - (safe) from his tongue and (safe) from his hands. (Tirmidhī, Kitab al-'Īmān)

As obvious, it means that a true and staunch Muslim has to be the one who hurts none. Similarly, a true and successful *Muhājir* is the one who does not consider migration from his home country as the ultimate obligation. He should, rather, leave everything else the Sharī'ah has declared to be unlawful or impermissible. Said poetically, it would be saying something like: اپنے دل کو بھی بدل جامہ احرام کے ساتھ (When you change into the *Iḥrām* garment, better change your heart too!)

The Merits of *Hijrah*

Just as the verses about *Jihād* are spread out all over in the Holy Qur'ān, *Hijrah* too has been mentioned many times in most of the Sūrahs. A cumulative view of these verses shows that there are three kinds of themes in verses relating to *Hijrah*. Firstly, there are the merits of *Hijrah*; secondly, its worldly and other-worldly blessings; and thirdly, warnings against not migrating from *Dār al-Kufr* despite having the ability to do so.

As for the merits of *Hijrah*, there is a verse in Sūrah al-Baqarah:

اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَالَّذِيْنَ هَاجَرُوْا وَجَاهَدُوْا فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ اُولٰٓئِكَ يَرْجُوْنَ رَحْمَةَ اللّٰهِ وَاللّٰهُ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ.

As for those who believed and those who migrated and carried out *Jihād* in the way of Allah, they do hope for Allah's mercy and Allah is Forgiving, Very-Merciful - (2:218).

The second verse appears in Sūrah al-Taubah:

الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَهَاجَرُوْا وَجَاهَدُوْا فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ بِاَمْوَالِهِمْ وَاَنْفُسِهِمْ اَعْظَمُ دَرَجَةً عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ وَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْفَآئِزُوْنَ

And those who believed and emigrated and took up Jihād in the way of Allah with their wealth and lives are greater in rank in the sight of Allah - and they are the successful ones - (9:20).

The third verse belongs to Sūrah al-Nisā' and appears right here as part of the set of verses under study:

وَمَنْ يَّخْرُجْ مِنْۢ بَيْتِهٖ مُهَاجِرًا اِلَى اللّٰهِ وَرَسُوْلِهٖ ثُمَّ يُدْرِكْهُ الْمَوْتُ فَقَدْ وَقَعَ اَجْرُهٗ عَلَى اللّٰهِ

And whoever migrates in the way of Allah shall find in the earth many a place to settle and a wide dimension (of resources). And whoever leaves his home migrating for the sake of Allah and His Messenger and death overtakes him, then, his reward is established with Allah. And Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful - (4:100).

According to some narrations, this last verse was revealed about Sayyidnā Khālid ibn Ḥizam at the time of the migration to Ethiopia. He had left Makkah on his way to Ethiopia with the intention of Hijrah. Enroute, a snake bit him which caused his death. In short, the three verses cited above have clearly emphasized Hijrah from *Dār al-Kufr* (migration from the Abode of Disbelief) and the many merits it has.

In a ḥadīth, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said: اَلْهِجْرَةُ تَهْدِمُ مَاكَانَ قَبْلَهَا meaning: Hijrah will undo all sins which may have been committed before it.

The Blessings of Hijrah

As for blessings, a verse from Sūrah al-Naḥl says:

وَالَّذِيْنَ هَاجَرُوْا فِي اللّٰهِ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَا ظُلِمُوْا لَنُبَوِّئَنَّهُمْ فِي الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً وَّلَاَجْرُ الْاٰخِرَةِ اَكْبَرُ لَوْ كَانُوْا يَعْلَمُوْنَ .

And those who migrated for the sake of Allah after they were subjected to injustice, to them We shall give a good place to be in the world while the reward of the Hereafter is certainly

great - only if they had realized! (16:41)

The fourth verse of the set of four verses (97-100) appearing at the head of this part of the Commentary deals with approximately the same subject. There it has been said:

وَمَنْ يُّهَاجِرْ فِىْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ يَجِدْ فِى الْاَرْضِ مُرٰغَمًا كَثِيْرًا وَّسَعَةً

And whoever migrates in the way of Allah shall find in the earth many a place to settle and a wide dimension (of resources).

The word '*murāgham*' in the verse is a verbal noun which means 'to move from one land to the other' and the place to which one moves and settles is also called '*murāgham*'.

Both these verses quoted above tell us about the open and the hidden blessings of Hijrah where Almighty Allah has promised to everyone who migrates for the sake of Allah and His Messenger that He shall open new opportunities in the world for them and give them a good home to settle. As for the rewards and ranks of the Hereafter, they are beyond any reach of expectation or imagination.

The words لَنُبَوِّئَنَّهُمْ فِى الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً which promise 'a good place to be' in the world have been interpreted variously. Mujāhid explains it as 'lawful sustenance', Ḥasan al-Baṣrī as 'good home' while some other commentators have interpreted it as 'superiority in excellence, honour and power over antagonists.' The truth of the matter is that all these elements are included within the sense of the verse. World history bears witness that whoever has left his homeland for the sake of Allah, to him Almighty Allah has given a home far better than what he had earlier, far more honour and far more comfort. Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام migrated to Syria from his homeland in Iraq - Allah gave him all those things. Sayyidnā Mūsā and the Banī Isrā'īl migrated from Egypt, their homeland for the sake of Allah, then He gave them the land of Syria, a better homeland. Then, they got Egypt too. When our master and the last of the prophets, Sayyidnā Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وسلم and his Companions left Makkah for the sake of Allah and His Messenger, these blessed emigrants found the best of shelter in Madīnah, far better than Makkah. There they had honour and power and peace and prosperity. Of course, this does not include the transitory hardship

faced during the early period of Hijrah. But, soon after that, the blessings, which were showered on these people and which continued through several generations, shall be the proper yardstick in this matter.

Events related to the poverty and hunger of Noble Companions so well-known belong generally to the early period of Hijrah; or, go as what can be called volitional acceptance of poverty, a dignified attitude of readiness to live with less (*Faqr*). In other words, they just did not like worldly wealth and property as a result of which they lost no time in spending what they received, in the way of Allah. This was very much the state in which the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم lived. His lack of means and patience in hunger were simply voluntary. He just did not choose to be rich. Nonetheless, during the sixth year of Hijrah, after the conquest of Khyber, things had changed and sufficient means of sustenance were available for the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and his family. The same was the case with all righteous caliphs. When they reached Madīnah, Allah had given them everything they needed. But, when Islam needed their support, Sayyidnā Abū Bakr came forward and donated everything he had in his house. The Mother of the Faithful, Sayyidah Zaynab would give away all her stipend money to the poor and the needy and remain satisfied living indigently. For this reason, she was called 'The Mother of the Needy'. On the other side, no less in number were the rich ones among the Companions who left wealth and property behind. There were many among the Companions who were poor in their home-city of Makkah but Allah Almighty made them rich and happy after Hijrah. Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضى الله تعالى عنه can be cited as a good example. When he was appointed the governor of a province, he used to enjoy talking about his past with unusual relish. He would formally address himself and say: 'O Abū Hurairah, you are the same man, the servant of a tribe. Your salary was what you could eat. Your duty was to walk with those who rode on a journey and your duty was to collect firewood for them when they broke their journey at a certain stage. Today, because of Islam, you are here, so high from so low, and they call you the Commander of the Faithful!

In summation, it can be said that the world has openly witnessed

the fulfillment of the promise Allah has made in the Qur'ān. However, the verse has put a condition that they must be 'true emigrants for the sake of Allah', a substantiation of *Hājarū fi-llāh*. This kind of emigrant should have not migrated for the sake of wordly wealth, office, power, recognition, honour or influence. Otherwise, in a ḥadīth of al-Bukhārī, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has also been reported to have said: 'Those who migrate for the sake of Allah and His Messenger, their migration is precisely for Allah and His Messenger.' It means that this is the correct mode of Hijrah the merits and blessings of which appear in the Qur'ān. As for those who migrate to make money or marry a woman, their compensation against Hijrah is exactly what they migrated for.

In our time, some groups of *muhājirīn* (emigrants) who are living in distress are either in that transitory stage of the early period of Hijrah which is usually marked with hardships, or they are not *Muhājirs* in the real sense. They should correct their intention and take charge of the circumstances under which they live. After their intention and their corresponding deeds have been corrected, they shall witness the truth of Allah's promise with their own eyes.

Verses 101 104

وَإِذَا ضَرَبْتُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ فَلَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ أَنْ تَقْصُرُوا
مِنَ الصَّلٰوةِ إِنْ خِفْتُمْ أَنْ يَفْتِنَكُمُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا ۚ إِنَّ الْكٰفِرِينَ
كَانُوا لَكُمْ عَدُوًّا مُبِينًا ﴿١٠١﴾ وَإِذَا كُنْتَ فِيهِمْ فَأَقَمْتَ لَهُمُ
الصَّلٰوةَ فَلْتَقُمْ طَائِفَةٌ مِنْهُمْ مَعَكَ وَلْيَأْخُذُوا أَسْلِحَتَهُمْ فَإِذَا
سَجَدُوا فَلْيَكُونُوا مِنْ وَرَائِكُمْ وَلْتَأْتِ طَائِفَةٌ أُخْرٰى لَمْ
يُصَلُّوا فَلْيُصَلُّوا مَعَكَ وَلْيَأْخُذُوا حِذْرَهُمْ وَأَسْلِحَتَهُمْ ۚ وَدَّ
الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَوْ تَغْفُلُونَ عَنْ أَسْلِحَتِكُمْ وَأَمْتِعَتِكُمْ فَيَمِيلُونَ
عَلَيْكُمْ مَيْلَةً وَاحِدَةً ۚ وَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ إِنْ كَانَ بِكُمْ أَذًى مِنْ
مَطَرٍ أَوْ كُنْتُمْ مَرْضٰى أَنْ تَضَعُوا أَسْلِحَتَكُمْ ۚ وَخُذُوا حِذْرَكُمْ ۚ إِنَّ

اللّٰهَ اَعَدَّ لِلْكٰفِرِيْنَ عَذَابًا مُّهِيْنًا ﴿١٠٢﴾ فَاِذَا قَضَيْتُمُ الصَّلٰوةَ
فَاذْكُرُوا اللّٰهَ قِيَامًا وَّقُعُوْدًا وَّعَلٰى جُنُوْبِكُمْ ۚ فَاِذَا اطْمَاْنَنْتُمْ
فَاَقِيْمُوا الصَّلٰوةَ ۚ اِنَّ الصَّلٰوةَ كَانَتْ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ كِتٰبًا
مَّوْقُوْتًا ﴿١٠٣﴾ وَلَا تَهِنُوْا فِي ابْتِغَآءِ الْقَوْمِ ۭ اِنْ تَكُوْنُوْا تَاْلَمُوْنَ
فَاِنَّهُمْ يَاْلَمُوْنَ كَمَا تَاْلَمُوْنَ ۚ وَتَرْجُوْنَ مِنَ اللّٰهِ مَا لَا يَرْجُوْنَ ۭ وَكَانَ
اللّٰهُ عَلِيْمًا حَكِيْمًا ﴿١٠٤﴾

And when you travel in the earth, there is no sin on you in shortening your *Ṣalāh* if you fear that the disbelievers would put you in trouble. Surely, the disbelievers are an open enemy for you. [101]

And when you (O prophet) are in their midst, and arrange for them the *Ṣalāh*, then, a party from them should stand with you and should take their arms along. Then, once they performed *Sajdah*,[1] they should move away from you and the other party, which has not yet performed *Ṣalāh*, should come and perform *Ṣalāh* with you, and should take their precautionary measures and their arms. Those who disbelieve would want you to become heedless to your arms and your belongings so they come down upon you in a single move. And there is no sin on you, if you have some inconvenience due to rain or you are sick, in putting your arms aside. And do take your precautionary measures. Surely, Allah has prepared for the disbelievers a humiliating punishment. [102]

And once you have finished your *Ṣalāh*, then, remember Allah while standing, sitting and reclining. And as soon as you are secure, perform the *Ṣalāh* as due. Surely, *Ṣalāh* is an obligation on the believers which is tied up with time. [103]

And do not show weakness in pursuing these people. If you suffer, then, they suffer as you suffer, while you hope from Allah what they do not hope. And Allah is

1. *Sajdah* or *Sujud*, a way of prostration specified by the Sharī‘ah of Islam as a part of *Ṣalah*.

All-Knowing, All-Wise. [104]

Commentary

The subject of Jihād and Hijrah were taken up in previous verses. Since travel is involved in Jihād and Hijrah under most conditions, the likelihood of confrontation with the enemy is strong and frequent while making such a trip. Therefore, special mention has been made in the verses cited above of some particular leaves and concessions in the performance of Ṣalāh in due consideration of travel and its dangers.

The concessions given in travel

(In Islamic legal terminology, *Safar* means journey or travel; *Qaṣr* refers to the making of one's Ṣalāh short while in that status. Thus, four obligatory *Raka'āt* of Ẓuhr, 'Aṣr and 'Ishā are reduced in number and confined to two *Raka'āt* only.)

Rulings:

1. Full Ṣalāh is made in a journey which is less than 48 miles.

2. If, after reaching the destination at the end of the journey, one intends to stay there for less than fifteen days, rules relating to 'journey' will continue to apply to him, that is, the obligatory four *Raka'āt* of Ṣalāh will be reduced to half. This is *Qaṣr*. Now, if one intends to stay at one place for fifteen days, or more, it will become his place or country of residence. Here too, *Qaṣr* will not be observed as it was not observed in his original home country, that is, full Ṣalāh will be performed.

3. *Qaṣr* is done in the *Farḍ* (obligatory) Ṣalāh of Ẓuhr, 'Aṣr and 'Ishā' only. There is no *Qaṣr* in Maghrib and Fajr, nor in Sunnah and *Witr* prayers.

5. If, there be no fear of possible danger during a journey, *Qaṣr* will still be observed in making Ṣalāh.

6. Some people are troubled by apprehensions of sin when making their Ṣalāh short (*Qaṣr*) in place of the regular full Ṣalāh. This is not correct because *Qaṣr* is also a rule of the Sharī'ah following which brings no sin. On the contrary, it brings reward.

7. Verse 102 mentions a special way of offering Ṣalāh in a state where, due to the fear of enemy, all the Muslims cannot pray in a

single congregation. This special way is called '*Ṣalātul-Khawf*', the details of which are found in the books of Islamic *Fiqh*. Verse 102 says: وَإِذَا كُنْتَ فِيهِمْ فَأَقَمْتَ لَهُمُ الصَّلٰوةَ (And when you {O prophet} are among them and arrange for them the Ṣalāh). Let this not be construed to mean that the injunction of the Ṣalāh of Fear (*Ṣalātul-Khawf*) is no more imperative because the blessed person of the noble Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is no more present among us. The reason is that this restriction has been mentioned here in terms of the situation at that particular time, for there can be no *sans*-excuse Imām of Ṣalāh in the presence of the Prophet. After him, whoever is the Imām shall be deemed to be standing in his place and he will be the one to lead the *Ṣalātul-Khawf*. All leading religious authorities agree that the injunction of *Ṣalātul-Khawf* is operative even after him and has not been abrogated.

8. Just as making *Ṣalatul-Khawf* is permissible when in fear of hostility from human beings, so it is when one is gripped with the fear of hurt from some beast like a lion or python and there is very little time left to make the Ṣalāh.

9. In this verse (102), mention has been made of both groups making one *Raka'ah* each, but the method of performing the second *Raka'ah* has appeared in Ḥadīth which says: 'When the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم turned for *Salām* after the completion of his two *Raka'āt*, the two groups went on to complete their one *Raka'ah* each on their own'. More details can be seen there.

Verses 105 - 113

إِنَّآ أَنْزَلْنَآ إِلَيْكَ الْكِتٰبَ بِالْحَقِّ لِتَحْكُمَ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ بِمَآ أَرٰىكَ
اللّٰهُ ۚ وَلَا تَكُنْ لِّلْخَآئِنِيْنَ خَصِيْمًا ﴿١٠٥﴾ وَاسْتَغْفِرِ اللّٰهَ ۚ إِنَّ
اللّٰهَ كَانَ غَفُوْرًا رَّحِيْمًا ﴿١٠٦﴾ وَلَا تُجَادِلْ عَنِ الَّذِيْنَ يَخْتَانُوْنَ
أَنْفُسَهُمْ ۚ إِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يُحِبُّ مَنْ كَانَ خَوَّانًا أَثِيْمًا ﴿١٠٧﴾
يَّسْتَخْفُوْنَ مِنَ النَّاسِ وَلَا يَسْتَخْفُوْنَ مِنَ اللّٰهِ وَهُوَ مَعَهُمْ إِذْ
يُبَيِّتُوْنَ مَا لَا يَرْضٰى مِنَ الْقَوْلِ ۚ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ بِمَا يَعْمَلُوْنَ
مُحِيْطًا ﴿١٠٨﴾ هٰٓأَنْتُمْ هٰٓؤُلَآءِ جٰدَلْتُمْ عَنْهُمْ فِي الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا

فَمَنۡ يُّجَادِلُ اللّٰهَ عَنۡهُمۡ يَوۡمَ الۡقِيٰمَةِ اَمۡ مَّنۡ يَّكُوۡنُ عَلَيۡهِمۡ
وَكِيۡلًا ﴿١٠٩﴾ وَمَنۡ يَّعۡمَلۡ سُوۡٓءًا اَوۡ يَظۡلِمۡ نَفۡسَهٗ ثُمَّ يَسۡتَغۡفِرِ
اللّٰهَ يَجِدِ اللّٰهَ غَفُوۡرًا رَّحِيۡمًا ﴿١١٠﴾ وَمَنۡ يَّكۡسِبۡ اِثۡمًا فَاِنَّمَا
يَكۡسِبُهٗ عَلٰى نَفۡسِهٖ ؕ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ عَلِيۡمًا حَكِيۡمًا ﴿١١١﴾ وَمَنۡ
يَّكۡسِبۡ خَطِيۡٓـئَةً اَوۡ اِثۡمًا ثُمَّ يَرۡمِ بِهٖ بَرِيۡٓـئًا فَقَدِ احۡتَمَلَ بُهۡتَانًا
وَّاِثۡمًا مُّبِيۡنًا ﴿١١٢﴾ وَلَوۡلَا فَضۡلُ اللّٰهِ عَلَيۡكَ وَرَحۡمَتُهٗ لَهَمَّتۡ
طَّآئِفَةٌ مِّنۡهُمۡ اَنۡ يُّضِلُّوۡكَ ؕ وَمَا يُضِلُّوۡنَ اِلَّاۤ اَنۡفُسَهُمۡ وَمَا
يَضُرُّوۡنَكَ مِنۡ شَىۡءٍ ؕ وَاَنۡزَلَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيۡكَ الۡكِتٰبَ وَالۡحِكۡمَةَ
وَعَلَّمَكَ مَا لَمۡ تَكُنۡ تَعۡلَمُ ؕ وَكَانَ فَضۡلُ اللّٰهِ عَلَيۡكَ
عَظِيۡمًا ﴿١١٣﴾

Surely, We have revealed to you the Book with the truth so that you may judge between people with the insight Allah has given to you. And do not be an advocate for those who breach trust. [105] **And seek forgiveness from Allah. Surely, Allah is All-Forgiving, Very-Merciful.** [106]

And do not argue on behalf of those who betray themselves. Surely, Allah does not like anyone who is a sinful betrayer. [107] **They hide from people but do not hide from Allah. And He is with them when they make plans to say what He does not approve. And Allah encompasses whatever they do.** [108] **Look, this is what you are -- you have argued for them in the worldly life but who shall argue for them with Allah on Doomsday, or who shall be their defender?** [109]

And whoever acts evil or wrongs himself, then seeks forgiveness from Allah, shall find Allah Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful. [110]

And whoever commits a sin, commits it only against himself. And Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise. [111]

And whoever commits a vice or a sin, then shifts its blame to an innocent person, he indeed takes the

burden of a false imputation and a glaring sin. [112]

And if the grace of Allah and His mercy were not with you, a group from them had resolved to mislead you. And they mislead none but themselves. And they can do you no harm. And Allah has revealed to you the Book and the wisdom and has taught you what you did not know. And the grace of Allah on you has always been great. [113]

Sequence

While discussing the matters relating to the open disbelievers, the Holy Qur'ān has, in some places in the previous verses, referred to the hypocrites and has pointed out that *Kufr* or disbelief was the common denominator between them. Further on, a particular episode relating to some hypocrites finds mention in the present verses, details of which are being given below.

The background of these verses

The nine verses (105-113) cited above refer to a particular episode. But, very much in accordance with the characteristic style of the Qur'ān, the instructions given in this conection are not peculiar to this episode. They are, rather, a set of basic principles and rules commonly beneficial for all Muslims whether of a given time or of future generations.

Let us go to the event first, then consider the wisdom of related instructions which provide solutions to corresponding problems. The episode centres around the clan of Banū Ubayriq in Madīnah. A man from this clan - his name being Bashir as in the narration of Tirmidhī and Ḥākim, or Tu'mah as in the narration of al-Baghawī and Ibn Jarīr - broke into the house of Sayyidnā Rifā'ah, the uncle of Sayyidnā Qatādah ibn al-Nu'mān, and committed a theft.

In the narration of Tirmidhī, it is also mentioned that this man was, in reality, a hypocrite. He used to live in Madīnah yet was audacious enough to compose poetic satires insulting the noble Companions رضی اللہ عنہم and used to publicise these in the name of others while keeping his identity concealed.

As for the actual theft it was committed during the early period of Hijrah when Muslims generally lived under straightened circum-

stances facing all sorts of need, hunger and deprivation. The common food they ate was bread from barley flour or dates, or wheat flour which was scarce and just not available in Madīnah. Once in a while, when it did come from Syria some people would buy it for guests or for some other special need. Thus, Sayyidnā Rifā'ah bought some wheat flour for himself, put it in a bag, added some arms on top of it and stashed the bag in a small roomette of the house in all possible safety. But, this man - Ibn Ubayriq, Bashīr or Tu'mah - somehow came to know, broke into the house and decamped with the bag. When Sayyidnā Rifā'ah discovered the theft in the morning, he went to his nephew, Qatādah and told him about it. Together they went out investigating in the locality. Some people said that they had seen the light of fire coming from the Banū Ubayriq house last night and that probably they were cooking what was stolen. When Banū Ubayriq learnt about their secret being out, they themselves came there and charged that the theft was committed by Labīd ibn Sahl. Labid was well-known as a sincere and pious Muslim. When Labid himself came to know about this allegation, he came out of his house, sword in hand, saying: You are blaming me for this theft, now I am not going to put my sword back into the sheath, until the truth of this theft becomes clear.

Quietly, Banū Ubayriq confided to him: Do not worry. Nobody is blaming you. Moreover, this is not the sort of thing you would do. At this point, the narration in al-Baghawī and Ibn Jarīr says that Banū Ubayriq charged a Jew with the theft and, very cleverly, made a track of seemingly falling flour from a slit in the bag, which was their own work, all the way from Rifā'ah's house to the house of the Jew. When the traces of the flour were discovered and word went around, they carried the stolen arms and armours as well to the same Jew and left these with him for safe keeping. Following investigations, they were recovered from his house. The Jew declared on oath that these were given to him by Ibn Ubayriq.

In order to bring the two narrations of Tirmidhī and al-Baghawī into harmony, it can be said that may be Banū Ubayriq had first charged Labīd ibn Ṣahl with the theft, but once they realized that their ruse was not working, they targeted the Jew with the blame. Ultimately then, the case now rested between the Jew and Banū Ubayriq.

On the other side, Sayyidnā Qatādah and Rifā'ah were overwhelmingly convinced on the basis of circumstancial evidence that this was the work of Banū Ubayriq. Sayyidnā Qatādah went to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and told him about the theft and also told him that he strongly suspected Banū Ubayriq. When Banū Ubayriq heard the news, they came to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and complained against Sayyidnā Qatādah and Rifā'ah that they were putting the blame for the theft on them without having any valid legal proof and despite the fact that the stolen property was recovered from the house of the Jew. They appealed to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم to restrain Sayyidnā Qatādah and Rifā'ah from blaming them for the theft and if they had to sue anyone, they should sue the Jew.

Things as they appeared on the outside made even the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم incline towards the probability that the theft was committed by the Jew and that the accusation against Banū Ubayriq was not correct. So much so that, according to the narration of al-Baghawī, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had the intention of inflicting the punishment for theft on the Jew and sever his hand.

Matters went worse when Sayyidnā Qatādah appeared before the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم who admonished him by saying that he was accusing a Muslim family of theft without any proof. Sayyidnā Qatādah was grieved about the whole thing and wished that he had not spoken to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم about this matter even if he had to bear by the loss of his property. Similarly, when Sayyidnā Rifā'ah learnt about what the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had said, he too exercised patience and said: والله المستعان (And Allah is the one from whom all help is sought).

Not much time had passed when a whole section of the Qur'ān was revealed about this episode through which the reality behind it was shown to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and general instructions covering such cases were given. As the Holy Qur'ān exposed the theft committed by Banū Ubayriq and acquitted the Jew. Banū Ubayriq were left with no choice but to return the stolen property to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم who had it returned to the owner, Sayyidnā Rifā'ah, who finally endowed all those arms for use in Jihād. When Banū Ubayriq found their theft exposed, Bashīr, the son of Ubayriq

ran away from Madīnah landing in Makkah where he joined the disbelievers. Consequently, if he had been a hypocrite earlier, he became an acknowledged disbeliever; and, if he was a Muslim earlier, he was an apostate now.

It appears in Tafsīr al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ that the curse of his antagonism to Allah and His Messenger did not allow Bashīr ibn Ubayriq to live peacefully even in Makkah. When the woman at whose house he had taken up residence found out about this episode, she threw him out of her house. Thus, loitering on the streets came the day when he broke into somebody else's house. The wall through which he went in collapsed on him and killed him right there.

These are the details of the episode. Let us now give some thought to what has been said in the Qur'ān:

After telling the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم the reality behind the case of theft, in the first verse (105), it was said: Allah has given you the Qur'ān through revelations so that you can use the knowledge and insight gifted to you to decide matters accordingly, abstaining from taking sides with traitors, that is, Banū Ubayriq. No doubt, the obvious circumstances and evidences were such that a tilt towards the probability of the Jew having committed the theft was not a sin, yet contrary to the actual fact it was. Therefore, in the second verse (106), the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was asked to seek forgiveness from Allah because the station of prophets عليهم السلام is very high and Allah does not favour the issuance of even something so insignificant from them.

In the third verse (107), it has been emphatically asserted once again that the Messenger of Allah should not defend those who are disloyal and treacherous, for Allah does not like them.

The fourth verse (108) describes the condition of people who betray trust and act treacherously. It is strange that these people feel shy before other people like them and conceal their theft from them while they do not feel shy before Allah who is with them all the time and watches over everything they do, specially the occasion when they mutually conspired to put the blame on the Jew, went to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم , complained against Rifā'ah and Qatādah,

charged them of false accusation and appealed to the Holy Prophet ﷺ for support against the Jew.

The fifth verse (109) gives a strict warning to the supporters of Banū Ubayriq telling them that their support given to betrayers of trust in the mortal world does not end at that. There will be the Day of Doom when their case will come before Almighty Allah. Who will lend support to them at that time? The verse serves two purposes. It admonishes them, then reminds them of the hazards of the Hereafter persuading them thereby to repent and turn to Allah.

In the sixth verse (110), we can once again see the wise way of the Qur'ān at work when, in order to save sinners from total disappointment, it was said that a sin was a sin, big or small. When a sinner repents and seeks Allah's forgiveness, he finds Him forgiving, merciful. As obvious, there is an element of persuasion for those who have committed sin suggesting that they still had the time and the hope to just desist and repent sincerely; nothing is lost, Allah will forgive everything.

In the event that these people choose not to repent despite the option given to them, the seventh verse (111) carries the assurance that this action of theirs brings no harm to Almighty Allah or His Messenger or to Muslims. The sad nemesis of a person's evil deed shall be faced by the person himself.

In the eight verse (112), a general rule of conduct has been set forth. It stipulates that anyone who himself commits a crime, then goes on to put the blame on some innocent person (as in the episode cited above where the theft was committed by Banū Ubayriq themselves and they went on to put the blame on Sayyidnā Labid or the Jew) has done something grave by levelling a false accusation of great magnitude against an innocent person plus an open sin weighing heavy on one's shoulders.

Addressing the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم in the ninth verse (113), it has been said: It was Allah's grace and mercy that He revealed to you the reality behind the event of theft, otherwise these people would have misled you into error. But, since you are not alone, Allah's grace and mercy is with you, these people can never mislead you into error.

On the contrary, they themselves fall into error. Be sure that these people cannot harm you in any way whatsoever because Allah has revealed the Book and wisdom to you and taught you what you did not know.

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and *Ijtihād*

From verse 105 which begins with the words: إِنَّآ أَنزَلْنَآ إِلَيْكَ الْكِتٰبَ بِالْحَقِّ (Surely we have revealed to you the book with the truth) helps establish five rulings:

1. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had the right to arrive at his judgement in situations not covered by an explicit authority given in the Holy Qur'ān. In situations of major importance, there were many decisions he took by his *Ijtihād*.

2. The second rule that emerges from here is inseparably linked with the authenticity of *Ijtihād*. It means that, in the sight of Allah, an *Ijtihād* can be considered trustworthy only when it is based on and is deduced from Qur'ānic principles and the clear authority of its text. Simple opinions or views are not trustworthy, nor can they be termed as *Ijtihād* in the sense recognized in Sharī'ah.

3. The third rule of guidance we get to know is that the *Ijtihād* done by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was not like that done by *Mujtahid* Imāms where the probability of an error of judgement always remains. As for the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, when he took a decision on the basis of his *Ijtihād* any possible error in the judgment would always stand corrected by Allah Almighty. Therefore, when he took a decision based on his *Ijtihād* and nothing against it came from Almighty Allah, then, this was an indicator that the decision taken finds favour with Allah and is correct in His sight.

4. The fourth rule of guidance we come to know is: What the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم understood from the Qur'ān was nothing but what Almighty Allah had Himself made him understand. A possibility of misunderstanding just did not exist there. This is contrary to the case of other 'Ulama and *Mujtahidīn* whose understanding of the Qur'ān cannot be attributed to Almighty Allah in the sense that it was what Allah had told them. You will realize the difference when you carefully look at بِمَآ أَرٰىكَ اللّٰهُ (with the insight Allah has given to you)

which refers to the noble Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in this very verse. This is why - when someone said to Sayyidnā 'Umar: فَاحْكُمْ بِمَا أَرٰكَ اللّٰهُ (Decide as Allah shows you to) - he scolded him by saying: 'This is special to the Prophet of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم '.

5. The fifth ruling we deduce from here is that pursuing or advocating a false case or a false claim or to second or support them is totally *ḥarām* (forbidden).

The Reality of Repentance

Verse 110 which begins with the words: وَمَنْ يَّعْمَلْ سُوْٓءًا اَوْ يَظْلِمْ نَفْسَهٗ tells us that all sins, whether they affect others or affect one's own self, that is, whether they violate the rights of human beings (*Ḥuququl-'Ibād*) or rights of Allah (*Ḥuqūqullāh*), can be forgiven by one's repenting and praying for forgiveness. But, it is necessary to know the reality of showing repentance and seeking forgiveness. Mere verbal declarations of 'I seek Allah's forgiveness' (*Astaghfirullāh*) and 'I turn to Him in repentance' (*Wa atubu ilaihi*) are not acts of genuine repentance as such. Therefore, according to a consensus of 'Ulama, the person who is involved in some sin, is not ashamed of it and does not leave it or, at least, does not resolve to leave it in the future, then, his verbal declaration of *Astaghfirullāh* is an open mockery of repentance.

In short, for repentance (*Taubah*) to be genuine, three things are necessary:

1. Being ashamed of past sins.

2. Immediately leaving the sin one is in.

3. Resolving to stay away from sin in future.

However, forgiveness for sins related to the rights of the servants of Allah has to be sought from the wronged party itself; or, one should, to begin with, pay what was due or fulfill what was denied. These are binding conditions of genuine repentance.

Attributing one's sins to others brings added punishment

From verse 112 - وَمَنْ يَّكْسِبْ خَطِيْٓئَةً اَوْ اِثْمًا ثُمَّ يَرْمِ بِهٖ الخ - we know that a person who himself commits a sin, then goes on to ascribe it to an innocent man, does something terrible - he doubles and hardens his sin. He has made himself deserving of severe punishment, the punishment of his

own sin, then the added punishment for lying and accusing falsely.

The Reality of Qur'ān and Sunnah

In verse 113: وَاَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتٰبَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَعَلَّمَكَ مَالَمْ تَكُنْ تَعْلَمُ (And Allah has revealed to you the Book and the wisdom and has taught you what you did not know), by pairing *al-Kitāb* (the Book) and *al-Ḥikmah* (the Wisdom) it has been pointed out that *Ḥikmah* which is the name of the Sunnah and teachings of the noble Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم was also sent down by none but Allah Almighty. The difference is that its words are not from Allah and that is why they are not part of the Qur'ān. But, its meanings and that of the Qur'ān are certainly from Allah, therefore, it is obligatory to act in accordance with both.

This explains what some jurists say about *Waḥy* (Revelation) being of two kinds: *Matluww* - that which is recited, and *Ghayr-Matluww* - that which is not recited. *Waḥy Matluww* or the revelation which is recited is the name of the Qur'ān - the words and meanings of which are both from Allah. And *Ghayr-Matluww* or that which is not recited is the name of the *Ḥadīth* of the *Rasūl* the words of which are from the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم and the meanings of which are from Allah.

Another problem which gets resolved from the words: وَعَلَّمَكَ مَالَمْ تَكُنْ تَعْلَمُ (and taught you what you did not know) (113) is that the noble Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم did not have the all-comprehending knowledge of the entire universe equal to Almighty Allah, as some ignorant people do insist. The truth is that the measure of his knowledge was corresponding to what Allah bestowed upon him. However, there is no doubt that the knowledge bestowed upon the Holy Prophet ﷺ exceeds the combined knowledge of all created beings.

Verses 114-115

لَاخَيْرَ فِيْ كَثِيْرٍ مِّنْ نَّجْوٰىهُمْ اِلَّا مَنْ اَمَرَ بِصَدَقَةٍ اَوْ مَعْرُوْفٍ
اَوْ اِصْلَاحٍ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ ۭ وَمَنْ يَّفْعَلْ ذٰلِكَ ابْتِغَاۗءَ مَرْضَاتِ اللّٰهِ
فَسَوْفَ نُؤْتِيْهِ اَجْرًا عَظِيْمًا ﴿١١٤﴾ وَمَنْ يُّشَاقِقِ الرَّسُوْلَ مِنْۢ
بَعْدِ مَاتَبَيَّنَ لَهُ الْهُدٰى وَيَتَّبِعْ غَيْرَ سَبِيْلِ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ نُوَلِّهٖ
مَاتَوَلّٰى وَنُصْلِهٖ جَهَنَّمَ ۭ وَسَاۗءَتْ مَصِيْرًا ﴿١١٥﴾

There is no good in most of their whisperings unless one bids charity or a fair action or a reconciliation between people. And to one who does this to seek the pleasure of Allah, We shall give a great reward. [114] **And whoever breaks away with the Messenger after the right path has become clear to him and follows what is not the way of the believers, We shall let him have what he chose, and We shall admit him to Jahannam. And it is an evil place to return.** [115]

Sequence

Moving from the episode of theft and the conspiracies made to cover up the crime by false accusations against others, the text now highlights positive things that can be done through mutual consultation and which could help one to remain obedient to the Messenger's teachings and the command of Allah without ever trying to go against the ideal path taken by those who believe in Allah and His Messenger.

Commentary

In the first part of the verse (114): لَا خَيْرَ فِي كَثِيرٍ مِّن نَّجْوَاهُمْ translated as 'there is no good in most of their whisperings..', it has been declared that most talks people hold and plans they make to ensure transitory worldly gains, while unmindful of the concerns of their life-to-come, are devoid of good.

The second part: إِلَّا مَنْ أَمَرَ بِصَدَقَةٍ أَوْ مَعْرُوفٍ أَوْ إِصْلَاحٍ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ means that real good can come forth from mutual consultations only when people persuade each other to take part in charitable activities or ask people to do what is good and right or tell them to make peace between one another. It is said in a ḥadīth that anything one says is harmful for him in one way or the other unless, of course, the subject of his utterance is the remembrance of Allah or that he is bidding the Fair and forbidding the Unfair.

Bidding the Fair stands for *Amr bi al-Ma'rūf* which refers to every action considered good in the Sharī'ah and is patently recognized as such by those who know it. In contrast, there is the forbidding of the Unfair which stands for *Nahy 'an al-Munkar* which refers to every action considered undesirable in the Sharī'ah and is squarely unrecognized and unfamiliar to those who know it.

Bidding the Fair includes all imperatives and motivations through

which people are led to do what is good and right. Things like helping the oppressed, assisting the needy with loans, guiding the lost, all fall under this broad category. Though, charity and reconciliation between people are also part of this definition, but they have been taken up separately because their benefit reaches from one to another and improves the collective life of a community.

In addition to that, these two fields of activity cover what is most essential about public service. They seek to bring benefit to Allah's creation and they protect people against pain and loss. Charity spreads out benefits to people and reconciliation between them stops mutual pain and loss. Therefore, according to a consensus of the scholars of *Tafsīr*, the word *Ṣadaqah* (charity) used here carries a general sense which includes the obligatory *zakāh*, voluntary charities and everything done to bring benefit to someone.

The Graces of Making Peace

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has spoken highly about the merit of removing mutual bickerings among people and of bringing them to understand, accommodate and cooperate with each other. He said:

> "Shall I not tell you about an act which is far superior in rank to fasting, prayers and charity? The Companions submitted, 'Please do.' He, then, said: "That act is the removal of discord. That is, to remove bickering between two persons, make peace between them and thus eliminate discord."

He has also said: فساد ذات البين هى الحالقة "Mutual discord among people is what really shaves." Then, he explained it by saying: "This discord does not shave the head, but it shaves off one's faith."

In the concluding part of the verse (114), there appears a significant reminder that these good deeds to bid charity and fair action or a reconciliation among people can only be worthwhile and acceptable when they are undertaken sincerely, and exclusively for the pleasure of Allah, without any traces of personal or material interest.

The Consensus of the Community is a Valid Religious Authority

Two things have been identified as a great crime and as a cause of one's consignment to Hell in verse 115: وَمَنْ يُّشَاقِقِ الرَّسُوْلَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُ الْهُدٰى (And whoever breaks away with the Messenger after the right path has

become clear to him...). The first is opposing the Messenger of Allah. Obviously, doing so is *Kufr* (disbelief, infidelity) and a terrible curse. The second crime relates to a violation of universal Muslim consensus. It means the abandoning of something which has the universal agreement of all Muslims and opting for some other way against them. This explains that the consensus of the Muslim community has valid religious authority. In other words, we know that following the injunctions given in the Qur'ān and Sunnah is obligatory. Similarly, when the Muslim *Ummah* (Community) agrees about something universally, following its consensus becomes equally obligatory. Any opposition to this consensus is a grave sin as was said by the Holy Prophet ﷺ in a ḥadīth:

يَدُ اللّٰهِ عَلَى الْجَمَاعَةِ، مَنْ شَذَّ شُذَّ فِي النَّارِ

> That is, the hand of Allah is on the Muslim community. Whoever breaks away or separates himself from it will himself be separated for consignment to Hell.

Imām al-Shafi'ī was asked: 'Can the validity of the authority of the Consensus of Muslim Ummah be proved from the Holy Qur'ān?' He devoted to the recitation of the Qur'ān full three days, completing three recitals each during the day and night. Finally, the proof that he came up with was this verse. When he cited it before scholars, they all agreed: This proof is sufficient to confirm the authority of '*Ijmā*', the Consensus of Muslim Community.

Verses 116-121

إِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يَغْفِرُ أَنْ يُّشْرَكَ بِهٖ وَيَغْفِرُ مَا دُوْنَ ذٰلِكَ لِمَنْ يَّشَآءُ ؕ
وَمَنْ يُّشْرِكْ بِاللّٰهِ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ ضَلٰلًاۢ بَعِيْدًا ﴿۱۱۶﴾ إِنْ يَّدْعُوْنَ مِنْ
دُوْنِهٖٓ إِلَّآ إِنٰثًا ۚ وَإِنْ يَّدْعُوْنَ إِلَّا شَيْطٰنًا مَّرِيْدًا ﴿۱۱۷﴾ لَّعَنَهُ اللّٰهُ ۘ
وَقَالَ لَأَتَّخِذَنَّ مِنْ عِبَادِكَ نَصِيْبًا مَّفْرُوْضًا ﴿۱۱۸﴾ وَّلَأُضِلَّنَّهُمْ
وَلَأُمَنِّيَنَّهُمْ وَلَاٰمُرَنَّهُمْ فَلَيُبَتِّكُنَّ اٰذَانَ الْأَنْعَامِ وَلَاٰمُرَنَّهُمْ
فَلَيُغَيِّرُنَّ خَلْقَ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَمَنْ يَّتَّخِذِ الشَّيْطٰنَ وَلِيًّا مِّنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ
فَقَدْ خَسِرَ خُسْرَانًا مُّبِيْنًا ﴿۱۱۹﴾ يَعِدُهُمْ وَيُمَنِّيْهِمْ ؕ وَمَا يَعِدُهُمُ

الشَّيْطٰنُ اِلَّا غُرُوْرًا ﴿١٢٠﴾ اُولٰٓئِكَ مَاْوٰىهُمْ جَهَنَّمُ وَلَا يَجِدُوْنَ عَنْهَا مَحِيْصًا ﴿١٢١﴾

Surely, Allah does not forgive the ascribing of a partner to Him and forgives anything short of that for whomsoever He wills. And whoever ascribes a partner to Allah has indeed gone far astray. [116] **They invoke none, besides Him, but females; and they invoke none but Satan, the rebel** [117] **whom Allah has cursed. And he (the Satan) said, 'For sure, I will take a set share from Your slaves,** [118] **and I will lead them astray and I will tempt them with false hopes and give them my order so they shall slit the ears of cattle and I will give them my order so they shall alter the creation of Allah. And whoever takes the Satan as friend instead of Allah has incurred an obvious loss.** [119] **He (the Satan) makes promises to them and he tempts them with hopes. And the Satan does not make a promise to them but to deceive.** [120] **As for such, their shelter is Jahannam and they shall find no escape from it.** [121]

Sequence

Though, the mention of Jihād in preceding verses includes all forces hostile to Islam, yet the actual description was limited to Jews and the hypocrites. Out of the larger group of antagonists there were the pagans who were much more in numbers. The verses that follow take up their beliefs and point out to the punishment they will face. This has a coherence of its own at this place. It will be recalled that the thief mentioned earlier became an apostate. The lasting punishment he thus earned for himself becomes evident. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

Commentary

The first verse (116) اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يَغْفِرُ اَنْ يُّشْرَكَ بِهٖ وَيَغْفِرُ مَا دُوْنَ ذٰلِكَ لِمَنْ يَّشَآءُ (Surely, Allah does not forgive the ascribing of a partner to Him and forgives anything short of that for whomsoever He wills ...) has appeared earlier (48) in Sūrah al-Nisā' in the same words except for the words at their ends. In verse 48 appearing earlier, the words at the end are: وَمَنْ يُّشْرِكْ بِاللّٰهِ فَقَدِ افْتَرٰٓى اِثْمًا عَظِيْمًا (And whoever ascribes a partner to Allah has designed a great sin) while the words at the end of verse 116 before us are: وَمَنْ يُّشْرِكْ بِاللّٰهِ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ ضَلٰلًا بَعِيْدًا (And whoever ascribes a partner to Allah has indeed gone far astray). As explained by master exegetes, the

reason for this difference is that the addressees of the earlier verse (48) were the Jewish people of the Book who knew all about the truth of *Tauḥīd* (Allah's oneness), the falsity of *Shirk* (ascribing of a partner to Allah) and the veracity of the mission of the noble Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم through the Torah. Despite that, they got involved in *Shirk*. Thus, through their own conduct, they pretended that it was the very teaching of the Torah which is total forgery and false accusation. That is why it was said: فَقَدِ افْتَرَىٰ إِثْمًا عَظِيمًا (... has designed a great sin) at the end of verse 48. As for the verse before us (116), the addressees were the pagans of Makkah who did not have the background of any Book or Prophet before that time, but the rational arguments in support of the Oneness of Allah were all too clear. Taking stones crafted with their own hands as their objects of worship was something ineffectual, false and erroneous even in the sight of someone with ordinary common-sense. Therefore, here it was said: فَقَدْ ضَلَّ ضَلَالًا بَعِيدًا (... has indeed gone far astray).

The eternal Punishment of *Shirk* and *Kufr*:

Some people express doubt at this point. They think that punishment should be proportionate to the deed. The crime of disbelieving and of ascribing partners to Allah committed by the *Kafir* and the *Mushrik* was committed within the limited time frame of a given life. Why would its punishment be limitless and permanent? The answer is that the doer of *Kufr* and *Shirk* simply does not regard what he does as crime. This is, on the contrary, taken as something good and proper, worth one's while. Therefore, his line of action is accompanied by his firm intention that he will always be like that. Now, if such a *Kafir* or *Mushrik* adheres to this position right through the last breath, he has committed a permanent crime to the extent of his choice and volition, therefore, the punishment for it has to be permanent.

***Ẓulm*:**

There are three kinds of *Ẓulm* (injustice):

1. That which Allah will never forgive.
2. That which could be forgiven.
3. That which meets retribution from Allah.

The first kind of injustice is *Shirk*, the ascribing of a partner to Allah; the second kind of injustice is falling short in fulfilling the

rights of Allah, known as *Ḥuqūqullāh*; and the third kind of injustice is the contravention of the rights of Allah's created beings against each other, known as *Ḥuqūqul-'Ibād*. (Ibn Kathīr vide Musnad Bazar)

What is the reality of *Shirk*?

To consider any created being other than Allah equal to Allah in worship, or in love and reverence, is what *Shirk* really is. The Holy Qur'ān has reported the words of the disbelievers they shall utter on arrival into the *Jahannam*:

تَاللّٰهِ إِنْ كُنَّا لَفِي ضَلٰلٍ مُّبِينٍ، إِذْ نُسَوِّيكُمْ بِرَبِّ الْعٰلَمِينَ

By Allah, we were in obvious error when we had equated you with Allah, the Lord of all the worlds. (26:97,98)

It is evident that even the polytheists did not believe that the idols of their making were the Creator and the Master of the universe. It was, rather, under other erroneous assumptions that they had taken to regarding their idols equal to Allah in worship or in love and reverence. This was the *Shirk* which caused their being in *Jahannam* (Fath al-Mulhim).

In short, taking any created being as equal to Allah in His particular attributes - such as, the Creator, the Provider, the Absolute Master, the Knower of the Seen and the Unseen - is *Shirk*.

Verses 122-126

وَالَّذِينَ اٰمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ سَنُدْخِلُهُمْ جَنّٰتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ
تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ خٰلِدِينَ فِيهَآ اَبَدًا ۖ وَعْدَ اللّٰهِ حَقًّا ۖ وَمَنْ اَصْدَقُ
مِنَ اللّٰهِ قِيلًا ﴿١٢٢﴾ لَيْسَ بِاَمَانِيِّكُمْ وَلَآ اَمَانِيِّ اَهْلِ الْكِتٰبِ ۖ
مَنْ يَّعْمَلْ سُوْٓءًا يُّجْزَ بِهٖ ۙ وَلَا يَجِدْ لَهٗ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ وَلِيًّا وَّلَا
نَصِيرًا ﴿١٢٣﴾ وَمَنْ يَّعْمَلْ مِنَ الصّٰلِحٰتِ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ اَوْ اُنْثٰى
وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ يَدْخُلُوْنَ الْجَنَّةَ وَلَا يُظْلَمُوْنَ نَقِيرًا ﴿١٢٤﴾
وَمَنْ اَحْسَنُ دِينًا مِّمَّنْ اَسْلَمَ وَجْهَهٗ لِلّٰهِ وَهُوَ مُحْسِنٌ وَّاتَّبَعَ مِلَّةَ
اِبْرٰهِيمَ حَنِيفًا ۖ وَاتَّخَذَ اللّٰهُ اِبْرٰهِيمَ خَلِيلًا ﴿١٢٥﴾ وَلِلّٰهِ مَا فِي

السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِى الْاَرْضِ ؕ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ بِكُلِّ شَىْءٍ مُّحِيْطًا ﴿١٢٦﴾

And those who believe and do good deeds, them We shall admit to the gardens beneath which rivers flow. They shall live there for ever - a real promise from Allah. And who is more truthful than Allah in his word? [122]

This is not (a matter of) your fancies or the fancies of the People of the Book. And whoever does evil shall be requited for it and shall find for himself, besides Allah neither friend nor helper. [123] **And whoever, male or female, does good deeds and is a believer -- they shall enter Paradise and they shall not be wronged in the least.** [124]

And who is better in Faith than one who has surrendered his self to Allah and is good in deeds, and has followed the creed of Ibrāhīm, the upright. And Allah has made Ibrāhīm a friend. [125]

And to Allah belongs what is in the heavens and what is in the earth. And to everything Allah is encompassing. [126]

Commentary

A dialogue between Muslims and the People of the Book contending for glory against each other

Verse 123 which begins with the words: لَيْسَ بِاَمَانِيِّكُمْ وَلَآ اَمَانِيِّ اَهْلِ الْكِتٰبِ : 'This is not (a matter of) your fancies or the fancies of the People of the Book...', is about a cross talk between Muslims and the People of the Book. It is followed by a wise and judicious ruling on the confronting claims aimed at bringing the contestants to the right path. Finally, given here is a standard measure of determining as to who is superior and acceptable in the sight of Allah, a standard which, if observed carefully, would not let any human being fall into error or go astray.

According to Sayyidnā Qatādah, once it so happened that some Muslims and the People of the Book started talking to each other in a vainglorious strain. The People of the Book said that they were superior to Muslims because their Prophet came before the Prophet of

Islam and that their Book appeared before the Qur'ān of Muslims did. The Muslims countered by saying that they were superior to all of them for their Prophet was the Last of the Prophets and their Book was the Last of the Books which has abrogated all previous Books. Thereupon, the verse cited above was revealed. It means that such self-glorification and self-congratulation does not behove anyone for nobody becomes superior to anybody simply on the basis of conjectures, fancies and claims. Instead, everything depends on deeds. No matter how noble and superior one's Prophet and Book may be, it is the deed of the adherent which will count. If he acts evil, he will receive the kind of punishment from which he can never hope to be rescued by anyone.

When this verse was revealed, the noble Companions were acutely disturbed. Imām Muslim, al-Tirmidhī, al-Nasā'ī and Aḥmad رحمهم الله have reported a narration from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah in which he said: When this verse was revealed مَنْ يَّعْمَلْ سُوْٓءًا يُّجْزَ بِهٖ :"And whoever does evil shall be requited for it", we were deeply grieved and concerned. We submitted to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم : 'This verse leaves nothing out - the minutest of evil found in our deeds shall be requited!' The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: 'Do not worry. Keep doing what you can to the best of your ability for (the punishment mentioned here does not necessarily have to be that of Hell, instead) whatever hardship or pain which afflicts you makes amends for your sins and requites your evil deeds, to the limit that even a thorn which pinches someone's foot becomes an expiation of some sin.'

There is another narration which says that any sorrow or pain or sickness or anxiety which afflicts a Muslim in the life of this world becomes an expiation of his or her sins.

According to a narration of Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضى الله عنه as reported in Jami' al-Tirmidhī, Tafsīr Ibn Jarīr and elsewhere, when the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم recited this verse: مَنْ يَّعْمَلْ سُوْٓءًا يُّجْزَ بِهٖ (And whoever does evil shall be requited for it) to him, he felt as if his back was broken. When the noble Messenger of Allah noticed the reaction on him, he asked: 'What is the matter with you?' Thereupon, Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضى الله عنه submitted: '*Yā Rasūlallah*, there is hardly anyone among us who can claim to have done nothing bad in one's life. Now, if

every evil deed has to be requited, who can hope to go unscathed from among us?' He said: 'O Abū Bakr, you and your believing brothers need not worry about it because worldly hardships that you face shall make amends for your sins.'

As it appears in another narration, he said: 'O Abū Bakr, do you not get sick? Are you never tested by distress and sorrow?' Sayyidnā Abū Bakr said: 'No doubt, all this does happen.' Then, he said: 'There, this is the requital of whatever evil you may have done.'

In a ḥadīth appearing in Abū Dāwūd, Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah has been reported to have said: 'A discomfort faced by a servant of Allah in fever, or a pain that afflicts him in any other way, even the pinch of a thorn, all become an expiation of his or her sins, so much so that even the insignificant effort made by someone to look for something in one of his pockets and finding it in another comes to be an expiation of his sins.'

In short, this verse is a reminder to Muslims as well that they should not indulge in tall claims and wishful thinking. On the contrary, they should be concerned with what they actually do, for their success will not come solely on the basis of their formal adherence to a given Prophet and a Book. Instead, their real prosperity lies in making certain that their belief in them is correct and that they are particular about doing good deeds as enjoined. Verse 124 says: وَمَنْ يَّعْمَلْ مِنَ الصّٰلِحٰتِ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ اَوْ اُنْثٰى وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ يَدْخُلُوْنَ الْجَنَّةَ وَلَا يُظْلَمُوْنَ نَقِيْرًا. It means a man or woman who does good deeds, subject to the condition that such deeds issue forth from true faith, shall certainly go to Paradise fully rewarded for all his or her deeds without being wronged in the least. The hint given here is that the People of the Book or other non-Muslims may also have some good deeds of their own, but, since their faith is not sound, therefore, those deeds of theirs are not acceptable. As for Muslims, since their faith is sound and their deeds too are good, therefore, they are the successful ones, and superior to others.

Acceptability in the sight of Allah: A Criterion

The fourth verse (125) lays down a criterion to help determine correctly as to who is acceptable in the sight of Allah, and who is not. This criterion has two components. Any shortfall in either of the two components makes all efforts go waste. A careful look will reveal that

all strayings into error and evil, wherever they may be in this wide world, are triggered because of a shortfall in one of these two components. Compare Muslims with non-Muslims. Or, compare the different sects, groups and parties within the Muslim community itself. You will come across the same two points of reference - any deviation from either is bound to land one in disgrace. The verse says:

وَمَنْ اَحْسَنُ دِيْنًا مِّمَّنْ اَسْلَمَ وَجْهَهٗ لِلّٰهِ وَهُوَ مُحْسِنٌ وَّاتَّبَعَ مِلَّةَ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ حَنِيْفًا

> And who is better in Faith than one who has surrendered his self to Allah and is good in deeds, and has followed the creed of Ibrahim, the upright...) (125)

It means that there can be no way better than the way of the person who is an embodiment of two virtues:

1. Firstly, 'surrenders his or her self to Allah.' In other words, acts for the good pleasure of Allah with all sincerity at one's command without ever contaminating one's deeds with hypocritical or materialistic motives.

2. Secondly, 'and is good in deeds.' In other words, the way in which one acts should also be correct. According to the great commentator, Ibn Kathīr, the way in which one acts, the correct way, means that it will not be some self-invented way. On the contrary, this will have to be the unalloyed way of Islam as based on the injunctions of Almighty Allah and the teachings of His noble Messenger ﷺ .

Thus, we can see that there are two conditions for any deed to be acceptable in the sight of Almighty Allah. These are sincerity of intention and soundness of action, that is, being in accordance with the Sharī'ah and Sunnah. The first of the two conditions, *Ikhlās* or sincerity, relates to the heart, the inner most human dimension. The second condition, the compatibility with Sharī'ah, relates to the human exterior. Whoever fulfills both these conditions finds his or her exterior and interior perfectly synchronized. But, the moment one of the two conditions is found missing, that which is done becomes imperfect and unsound. The loss of sincerity makes one a hypocrite in practice while the failure in following the Sharī'ah, the designated way, makes one go astray.

Nations go astray because they lack sincerity or do not act right.

The history of nations and faiths reveals that all deviant groups of peoples have either lacked sincerity or have not acted right. These very two groups have been indentified in Sūrah Al-Fātiḥah as those who have deviated from the straight path. Those referred to as مَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ (who incurred {Your} wrath) are people who lack sincerity, and those called ضَآلِّيْنَ (who have gone astray) are those who have not acted right. The first group is a victim of desires while the other, that of doubts.

Everyone generally understands the first condition, that is, the need for sincerity and the futility of acting without it. But, good conduct - that is, following the Sharī'ah - is the condition even many Muslims ignore. They think a good deed is a good deed and could be done at one's choice although the Holy Qur'ān and the Sunnah have made it perfectly clear that good conduct depends exclusively on the teachings of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم and on following the Sunnah, the example set by him. Doing less than that and doing more than that are both crimes. The way offering three *raka'āt* of Ẓuhr prayers instead of the prescribed four is a crime, so, offering five is also a crime and sin of the same nature. The rule is: The condition set forth by Almighty Allah and His Messenger صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم for any act of worship is final. Any addition of conditions or restrictions from one's own side or taking to some form other than the one laid out by him are all impermissible and patently against the norms of good conduct, no matter how attractive they may appear to be on the surface. All new alterations (*Bid'āt* and *Muḥdathāt*) in the established religion which the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم declared to be straying into error, and against which he left behind emphatic instructions for Muslims so that they can stay safe, are all of this nature. Ignorant people do this with 'sincerity' as an act of worship worthy of the reward and pleasure of Allah, but the deed of such a person goes waste or becomes even sinful in the light of the Sharī'ah bequeathed by the noble Prophet ﷺ. It is for this reason that the Holy Qur'ān has repeatedly stressed on good conduct, that is, on following the Sunnah. It appears in Sūrah al-Mulk: لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ اَيُّكُمْ اَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا (So that He tests you as to who among you is good in deed - 67:2). It will be noticed that the words used here are: اَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا

(good in deed) and not أكثر عملاً (outnumbering in deeds). It shows that the text is not talking about the numerical abundance of deeds. It is, rather, pointing out to the doing of good deeds - and a good deed is nothing but what is done in accordance with the Sunnah of the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

This very concept of good conduct and the practical adherence to the Sunnah of the noble Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been identified in another verse of the Holy Qur'ān in the words وَمَنْ أَرَادَ الْآخِرَةَ وَسَعٰى لَهَا سَعْيَهَا (17:19) It means that Allah accepts the efforts and deeds of those who intend to have the good of the Hereafter, pure and unadulterated by any temporal considerations, and that they are making the needed effort, and that the effort they are making is proper as well, and the proper effort is exactly what has been explained to the community by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم through his word and deed. Any shift from this ideal of effort - whether increased or decreased - will not be accepted as the proper effort. Proper effort is nothing but what has been termed as good deed in the present verse.

Let us now recapitulate that the acceptance of any deed with Allah depends on the fulfillment of two conditions. These are sincerity and good deed. Good deed is another name of the act of following the Sunnah of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. Therefore, everyone who intends to do a good deed with full sincerity must first find out how it was done by the noble Messenger of Allah and what instructions he has left behind for us in that connection. We must understand that any deed of ours which stands removed from the course set by our noble Prophet, known as his Sunnah, will stand unacceptable. Therefore, in all our deeds relating to *Ṣalāh, Ṣawm, Ḥajj, Ẓakāh, Ṣadaqāt, Khayrāt, Dhikr* of Allah, *Ṣalāh* (*durūd*) and *Salām*, it is necessary to keep in mind the way these were done by the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and how he told us to do them.

At the end of the verse (125), an example has been cited, the example of sincerity and good conduct set by Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام the following of which has been declared as mandatory. By saying: وَاتَّخَذَ اللّٰهُ إِبْرٰهِيْمَ خَلِيْلًا (And Allah has made Ibrāhīm a friend), it has been hinted that this high station bestowed on Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام has good reason behind it for he was absolutely and superbly sincere and his

deed too was sound and correct with intimation from Allah.

Verses 127-130

وَيَسْتَفْتُوْنَكَ فِى النِّسَآءِ ؕ قُلِ اللّٰهُ يُفْتِيْكُمْ فِيْهِنَّ وَمَا يُتْلٰى
عَلَيْكُمْ فِى الْكِتٰبِ فِىْ يَتٰمَى النِّسَآءِ الّٰتِىْ لَا تُؤْتُوْنَهُنَّ مَا
كُتِبَ لَهُنَّ وَتَرْغَبُوْنَ اَنْ تَنْكِحُوْهُنَّ وَالْمُسْتَضْعَفِيْنَ مِنَ
الْوِلْدَانِ ۙ وَاَنْ تَقُوْمُوْا لِلْيَتٰمٰى بِالْقِسْطِ ؕ وَمَا تَفْعَلُوْا مِنْ خَيْرٍ
فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ بِهٖ عَلِيْمًا ﴿١٢٧﴾ وَاِنِ امْرَاَةٌ خَافَتْ مِنْۢ بَعْلِهَا
نُشُوْزًا اَوْ اِعْرَاضًا فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِمَآ اَنْ يُّصْلِحَا بَيْنَهُمَا
صُلْحًا ؕ وَالصُّلْحُ خَيْرٌ ؕ وَاُحْضِرَتِ الْاَنْفُسُ الشُّحَّ ؕ وَاِنْ
تُحْسِنُوْا وَتَتَّقُوْا فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ خَبِيْرًا ﴿١٢٨﴾ وَلَنْ
تَسْتَطِيْعُوْٓا اَنْ تَعْدِلُوْا بَيْنَ النِّسَآءِ وَلَوْ حَرَصْتُمْ فَلَا تَمِيْلُوْا
كُلَّ الْمَيْلِ فَتَذَرُوْهَا كَالْمُعَلَّقَةِ ؕ وَاِنْ تُصْلِحُوْا وَتَتَّقُوْا فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ
كَانَ غَفُوْرًا رَّحِيْمًا ﴿١٢٩﴾ وَاِنْ يَّتَفَرَّقَا يُغْنِ اللّٰهُ كُلًّا مِّنْ
سَعَتِهٖ ؕ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ وَاسِعًا حَكِيْمًا ﴿١٣٠﴾

And they ask you about women. Say, "Allah answers you about them, and so does what is recited to you from the Book regarding orphaned women whom you do not give what is prescribed for them and tend to marry them,[1] and regarding the weak from the children and that you should maintain justice for the orphans. And whatever good you do Allah is aware of it. [127]

And if a woman fears ill treatment or aversion from her

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1. The Qur'anic words وَتَرْغَبُوْنَ اَنْ تَنْكِحُوْهُنَّ admit two possible translations: First, "and tend to marry them," which refers to the people who, attracted to the beauty of the orphan girls, used to marry them without giving them the due rights of a wife. The second possible translation is: "and you avoid marrying them". It refers to the people who did not marry the orphan girls because of their unattractive features, but at the same time did not let them marry others, because they wanted that their wealth should remain in their hands.

husband, then, there is no sin on them in entering into a compromise between them. And the compromise is better. And avarice is made to be present in human souls. And if you do good and fear Allah, then, Allah is all-aware of what you do. [128]

And you shall never be able to maintain real equality between wives, even though you are eager to. So, do not lean totally (towards one) and leave the other hanging. And if you mend and fear Allah, then, Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful. [129]

And if they separate, Allah shall, through His capacity, make each of them need-free. And Allah is All-Embracing, All-Wise. [130]

At the beginning of this Sūrah, particular injunctions relating to orphans and women were mentioned. Also stressed there was the mandatory nature of the need to fulfill their rights. The reason was that, during the days of *Jāhiliyyah*, some people would simply refuse to give any part of the inheritance to them, others would unlawfully eat up what they got in inheritance or through any other alternate source, still others would marry them but avoided paying full dower they were entitled to; these were practices prohibited as stated earlier. This caused different situations to arise. There were those who thought that women and children are not entitled to inherit as a matter of right - may be, this injunction had come as an expedient measure for some people only and it was likely that it will be abrogated later. Some of them even waited for this to happen. But, when there was no abrogation, they decided among themselves that they should go directly to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and ask him. This they did. According to Ibn Jarīr and Ibn al-Mundhir, this very question was the reason behind the revelation of this verse and the verses which followed carried additional rulings relating to women (Bayān al-Qur'ān).

Commentary

Some Qur'ānic Instructions about Married Life

Verses 128-130 which begin with the words: وَإِنِ امْرَأَةٌ خَافَتْ مِنْ بَعْلِهَا (And if a woman fears ill treatment or aversion from her husband ...) and end at وَاسِعًا حَكِيمًا (... All-Embracing, All-Wise) carry instructions about the painful and hard part of married life which is faced by every married

couple during one or the other stage of their long association. This is mutual displeasure and tension which, if allowed to prevail without being checked through proper control, does not only result in severe problems for the couple in their married lives but also, at times, carries the evil effects to families and tribes involving them in all sorts of mutual confrontation and even fighting and killing. The Glorious Qur'ān has come to introduce a system of family life for man and woman both, keeping in view the whole range of their feelings. This system when followed will definitely make a home a paradise. Love and harmony will replace whatever bitterness there may be in the family. Just in case, inevitable circumstances bring the couple to the limit of separation, it would still be desirable to see that the parting of ways is done smoothly and painlessly. After that, when the relationship breaks, it is also necessary to watch that it leaves no emotional fallouts in the form of enmity, hostility, harm or hurt.

Out of these three verses, verse 128 is about circumstances under which relationship between a husband and wife becomes strained for reasons beyond their control. Both parties seem to be helpless in the matter. However, their mutual bitterness makes it likely that they will fail in fulfilling the rights they have on each other. For example, a husband does not have amorous feelings in his heart for his wife and she has no control over the means which could change his heart. She may be ugly or aged while the husband is handsome. Thus, it is obvious that the woman cannot be blamed in any way for what she is, nor can the man be censured for whatever he is.

Eventualities of this nature as part of the background in which the worse under reference was revealed, have been reported in Maẓharī and elsewhere. Under such circumstances, as for men, the general rule given by the Holy Qur'ān is: فَإِمْسَاكٌ بِمَعْرُوفٍ أَوْ تَسْرِيحٌ بِإِحْسَانٍ (2:229) that is, 'retain in an honourable manner or part amicably'. It means that if the intention is to continue living with one's wife, then, it is necessary to live with her amicably, fulfilling all rights due to her in the recognized manner. For anyone who finds himself incapable of doing so, it is proper to release her from the bond of marriage in a decent way. Now, if the woman too is willing to be released, the situation is open and clear as the parting of ways will come about in a pleasant manner.

But, should it be that the woman, under such conditions, is not willing to secure her release - whether in the interest of her children or because she has no other supporter - then, she is left with only one alternative: Get the husband to agree to some option. For example, the woman may surrender all or some of her rights while the husband takes it to be reasonable enough as it unburdens him of many claims against him with the advantage of having a wife in bonus. May be this arrangement makes peace prevail between them.

That such a compromise could be expected has been pointed out in this verse of the Holy Qur'ān by saying: وَأُحْضِرَتِ الْأَنْفُسُ الشُّحَّ (Avarice is made to be present in human souls). In such a compromise, the greed of the woman lies in her intense desire to protect the future of her children for she fears that her release from the husband will ruin it, or that her life elsewhere may come out to be more bitter. On the other side, the husband is tempted by what the woman does. He sees that she has forgiven her dower due on him fully or partly and that she has also stopped from claiming other rights as well. Why then, he may think, should it be at all difficult for him to get along with her? Thus, a mutual compromise would become easy.

Then, along with this, it was also said:

وَإِنِ امْرَأَةٌ خَافَتْ مِنْ بَعْلِهَا نُشُوزًا أَوْ إِعْرَاضًا فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِمَا أَنْ يُصْلِحَا بَيْنَهُمَا صُلْحًا

"And if a woman fears ill treatment or aversion from her husband, then, there is no sin upon them in entering into a compromise between them."

Here, the expression فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِمَا (... there is no sin upon them ...) has been used to cover the nature of the deal which, on the surface, appears to be a sort of bribe where the husband has been tempted with the forgiveness of dower and other claims and the bond of marital life has been kept intact. But, this (sagacious) statement of the Qur'ān has made it clear that this is not included under bribery. Instead, it is included under expediency in the sense of a wise consideration under complex circumstances when the parties involved surrender their initial claims and agree to some moderated mean. This is permissible.

The Interference of Others in a marital Dispute

According to al-Tafsīr al-Maẓhārī, the words used in the Holy Qur'ān at this place are: أَنْ يُّصْلِحَا بَيْنَهُمَا صُلْحًا . It means that the husband and wife should enter into a compromise in between them. Here, the word بَيْنَهُمَا (between the two of them) suggests that it is better if no third person interferes in husband-wife matters - let the two of them come to mutual compromise on some basis. This is because the injection of a third person may, at times, make the very compromise impossible. Even if such a compromise is reached, the weaknesses of the couple get exposed before a third person unnecessarily, staying safe against which is expedient for both parties.

Towards the end of this verse (128), it was said:

وَإِنْ تُحْسِنُوْا وَتَتَّقُوْا فَإِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ خَبِيْرًا

"And if you do good and fear Allah, then, Allah is all-aware of what you do."

In the background of options given earlier, the husband did have the legal choice of releasing his wife on the basis of emotional incompatibility which made it difficult for him to fulfill her rights. Then, according to the first sentence of this verse, it is also permissible to enter into a compromise with one's wife when she offers to surrender some of her claims. Now, the last of the verse cited here brings forth a third option. The meaning of what has been said is: 'But, if you keep the fear of Allah in your heart and elect to be gracefully benign in your conduct and carry on accommodatingly with the relationship despite your emotional incompatibility and keep fulfilling her rights as due, then, this excellent conduct of yours is before Allah, the result of which is obvious. Almighty Allah will reward you for your forbearance and for the graces of your good deeds with blessings you can never imagine. Perhaps, this is the reason why the text stops at: 'Allah is all-aware of what you do.' It does not spell out the return for the good deed. The hint thus given is that it will be far more than one can ever imagine.

A Summary of Comments made

When the husband, for some reason, feels emotionally estranged with his wife and realizes that his rights remain unfulfilled, he should

try to correct matters which fall within the range of what the wife can do. Such effort of correction can temporarily be expressed in the form of coldness, hard advice and even soft disciplining under circumstances of extreme compulsion as it has already appeared in the early verses of Sūrah al-Nisā'. If the husband loses hope in correction in spite of all his efforts, or there is something about it the correction of which is just not in the control of his wife, then comes the situation in which the law of Islam gives him the right to divorce and release his wife in a decent manner without any altercation. But, if he elects to go along with the relationship living under the same conditions while ignoring his rights and fulfilling hers in full, then, this conduct of his is highly meritorious and deserving of a great reward. In contrast, if the case is the other way around, that is, the husband does not fulfill the necessary rights of his wife for which reason the wife wishes to be released by him. Now, under this situation, if the husband is also willing to release her, the course is clear. The woman too has the right to react when the husband wishes to release her on the basis of non-fulfillment of his rights - she too has the right to opt for her freedom. In case, the husband is not ready to release her on his own, the wife has the right to reclaim her freedom through an Islamic court. But, if she braves through the cold and crooked ways of her husband with patience surrendering her claims to due rights, carries on living with him in a spirit of accommodation and keeps fulfilling his rights, then, this is highly meritorious for her and deserving of a great reward.

The Guideline in Essence

Thus, on the one hand, the Holy Qur'ān gives to both parties the legal right to remove difficulties from their relationship and to receive their due right; while, on the other, by prompting both of them to demonstrate high morals and to be patient with the loss of their rights, the instruction given was that they should abstain from severing their relationship to the farthest limit of possibility. Both parties should bypass bits of their claims and come to a compromise on some mutually agreed formula.

Compromise: The Better Option

Initially, this verse simply mentions that compromise is permissible in the event of a husband-wife difference and towards the end of

the verse, the parties have been prompted to carry on with the relationship in the best spirit of patience and forbearance in the event that such a compromise does not materialize. In between, there appears a sentence which proves the desirability of compromise as the favoured choice. It was said: وَالصُّلْحُ خَيْرٌ (The compromise is better). The nature of the sentence is fairly general as stated. It certainly includes husband-wife disputes in the present context. However, it also includes all other kinds of family differences as well as all mutual disputes, altercations and litigations that come up in worldly life. This is because the words of the Holy Qur'ān are general - 'The compromise is better'.

Thus, the parties would fare better if they avoid being stubborn about the fulfillment of their demands in toto and elect to forgo some of these from each side and agree to a compromise on some middle ground. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said:

كُلُّ صُلحٍ جَائِزٌ بَيْنَ الْمُسْلِمِيْنَ اِلَّاصُلْحًا اَحَلَّ حَرَامًا اَوْحَرَّمَ حَلَالًا، وَالْمُسْلِمُوْنَ
عَلٰى شُرُوْطِهِمْ اِلَّا شَرْطًا حَرَّمَ حَلَالًا

"Every compromise is permissible between Muslims except a compromise in which something unlawful has been made lawful or something lawful has been made unlawful and Muslims must abide by accepted conditions except a condition in which something lawful has been made unlawful." (Narrated by Al-Ḥakim from Kathīr ibn 'Abdullāh, Tafsīr Maẓharī)

For example, it is not permissible to enter into a compromise with one's wife on the condition that the husband will also marry her sister because Islamic law prohibits combining two sisters in the bond of marriage. This is *ḥarām* or unlawful. Or, the husband may wish to compromise on the condition that he will not fulfill the rights of the other wife for this amounts to turning something lawful into something unlawful.

Since, in the ḥadīth narration quoted above, every compromise has been declared as permissible in a general sense, Imām Abū Ḥanīfah has deduced from this statement the ruling that all kinds of compromises are permissible. They may be with an avowal, for example, the defendant's confession that he owes $1,000 as claimed by the plaintiff following which a compromise may be arrived at either by the

surrender of a certain part of the total amount claimed by the plaintiff, or by his taking something in lieu of the claimed amount, or through a lack of avowal or disavowal by the defendant who may simply wish to reach a certain compromise no matter what the claim be in reality. Or, despite a disclaimer, the defendant may bring himself round to pay up some of the amount just to end the dispute and this very action may make the compromise possible. All these three kinds of compromise are permissible. However, in the eventuality of silence or denial, there does exist a difference among some jurists.

Finally, worth mentioning here is a problem which relates to the compromise between a married couple mentioned in this verse. If a woman makes a compromise by surrendering some of her rights, this compromise will totally eliminate the right of the woman the fulfillment of which stood incumbent on the husband at the time of the compromise. For example, the payment of the dower which was due to to be paid by the husband before the compromise. So, when she makes a compromise by forgiving the whole or part of the dower, then, this dower or its part would stand devolved after which her right to claim it would lapse. But, the rights the fulfillment of which was just not obligatory on the husband at the time of the compromise - for example, the payment of expenses in the future or the right to privacy which would be applicable in the future - will not be, for all practical purposes, his responsibility to fulfill. If a compromise is reached on the basis of a surrender of these rights, the right of the woman to claim these does not devolve for ever. Instead, she can declare any time she so chooses that she is not willing to forgo the right in future. Under this situation, the husband will have the choice to release her. (Tafsīr Maẓharī etc.)

In the last verse (130) : وَإِنْ يَتَفَرَّقَا يُغْنِ اللّٰهُ كُلًّا مِّنْ سَعَتِهٖ (And if they separate, Allah shall, through His capacity, make each of them need-free), both parties have been comforted in case all efforts to put things right between them come to naught and they have to separate. This should be no cause for concern. Allah Almighty will make each of them free from needing the other. The woman will get another home, and a source of support, and the man will find another woman. The power of Allah is extensive. There is no reason to lose hope. Let each one of the

couple think of the life they had before getting married. They were two separate individuals who did not know each other as husband and wife. Almighty Allah made it possible for them to be united in marriage. The same thing can happen again.

By saying : وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ وَاسِعًا حَكِيْمًا (And Allah is All-Embracing, All-Wise) at the close of the verse, it has been confirmed that the dimensions of Allah's capacity are most extensive and everything that issues forth from Him is based on wisdom. It is quite possible that the very separation may be the most expedient solution of the problem. The post-separation period may bless them with mates that make their lives good to live.

No one is responsible for something beyond his control

In order to make married life pleasant and stable, the Holy Qur'ān has given important instructions to both parties in these verses. Out of these, there is the verse: وَلَنْ تَسْتَطِيْعُوْٓا اَنْ تَعْدِلُوْا بَيْنَ النِّسَآءِ (And you shall never be able to maintain real equality between wives ... -129) which carries a special instruction for both. At this point it will be recalled that the Holy Qur'ān has already established in the beginning of Sūrah al-Nisā' that a man who holds more than one wife in the bond of marriage is duty-bond to maintain justice and equality among all wives, and that if one thinks that he would be unable to fulfill this obligation, he should not take more than one wife. It was said: فَاِنْ خِفْتُمْ اَلَّا تَعْدِلُوْا فَوَاحِدَةً "But, if you fear that you will not maintain equity, then, (keep to) one woman (4:3)."

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has, by his word and deed, declared that maintaining justice and equality among wives is a very emphatic injunction and he has given stern warnings to those who contravene it. Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها has said that the Holy Prophet ﷺ took great care in making perfectly sure that he treats his wives equally and justly. While he did so, he prayed to Allah:

اَللّٰهُمَّ هٰذَا قَسْمِىْ فِيْمَا اَمْلِكُ، فَلَا تَلُمْنِىْ فِيْمَا تَمْلِكُ وَلَا اَمْلِكُ

> O Allah, this equalization of mine is in what I have in my control, therefore, do not make me answerable for what is in Your control (that is, emotional inclination) and not in mine.

Who could be in control of his self more than the Holy Prophet ﷺ ?

Yet, the matter of emotional inclination was what he too ruled as something out of his control and prayed to Almighty Allah that he be excused on that count.

The veneer of the words in verse 3 of Sūrah al-Nisā' gave the impression that maintaining equity between wives was an absolute obligation which, obviously, includes equity in emotional inclination while this is something not in one's control. Therefore, in this verse of the Sūrah al-Nisā', the matter was clarified by saying that in things which one does not control, equality is not obligatory. However, equality shall be observed in matters within one's control, for example, equality in spending nights with them, their living standards and cost of maintenance. Allah Almighty has revealed this injunction in a way which compels a God-fearing person to put it into practice. It was said: وَلَنْ تَسْتَطِيْعُوْٓا اَنْ تَعْدِلُوْا بَيْنَ النِّسَآءِ وَلَوْ حَرَصْتُمْ، فَلَا تَمِيْلُوْا كُلَّ الْمَيْلِ فَتَذَرُوْهَا كَالْمُعَلَّقَةِ (And you shall never be able to maintain real equality between wives, even though you are eager to. So, do not lean totally (towards one) and leave the other hanging).

This leads us to realize that the inability to maintain equality pointed out in this verse actually refers to the equality in emotional inclination which is beyond human control. Then, the words of this verse: فَلَا تَمِيْلُوْا كُلَّ الْمَيْلِ (So, do not lean totally ...) themselves contain the justification of this sense. This is because the words mean: 'Even though maintaining equality in emotional inclination is not within your power, yet you should not lean totally towards one of your wives so much so that you start preferring her even in matters which lie within your power and control'.

Thus, this verse of Sūrah al-Nisā' (129) becomes a clarification of the earlier verse (3) of the same Sūrah which outwarldly appeared to be suggesting that equality in emotional inclination too was obligatory. Now, this verse makes it precisely clear that this is not obligatory because it does not lie in one's power. Instead, what is obligatory is the equality in matters which do lie in one's power and discretion.

This verse cannot be used against polygamy

Incidentally, the details appearing above also serve to remove the misunderstanding of those who, by juxtaposing these two verses, wish to conclude that the verse appearing at the beginning of Sūrah al-Nisā'

(3) says: 'If you cannot maintain equality between wives, marry only one'; while, the other verse (129) says: 'Maintaining equality between two wives is just not possible'; therefore, the outcome is: The very keeping of two (or more) wives in the bond of marriage is impermissible as such!

Though surprising, Allah Almighty has Himself phrased these very two verses with the necessary material to remove this misunderstanding. The indication given in the present verses by the use of the words: فَلَا تَمِيلُوا كُلَّ الْمَيْلِ (So, do not lean totally) has appeared immediately before while the words used in verse 3 were: فَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ أَلَّا تَعْدِلُوا فَوَاحِدَةً : "But, if you fear that you will not maintain equity, then, (keep to) one woman." Here, in the later verse, saying: 'If you fear' as a condition openly indicates that maintaining justice and equality between wives is not beyond the realm of possibility or ability. Otherwise, there was no need for this extended word arrangement, more so, not to the limit of two full verses. For example, the verse which says: حُرِّمَتْ عَلَيْكُمْ أُمَّهَاتُكُمْ وَبَنَاتُكُمْ (Forbidden for you are your mothers and your daughters - 4:23) carries details pertaining to women marriage with whom is forbidden. Then, by saying: وَأَنْ تَجْمَعُوا بَيْنَ الْأُخْتَيْنِ (and that you combine two sisters in the bond of marriage - 4:23), it has been declared that combining two sisters in marriage is unlawful. Similarly, it was quite possible to say that having more than one wife simultaneously is unlawful. If so, the restriction of بَيْنَ الْأُخْتَيْنِ (two sisters) with أَنْ تَجْمَعُوا (that you combine) would have become redundant. It was possible to say this in one single sentence, something like: وَأَنْ تَجْمَعُوا بَيْنَ امْرَأَتَيْنِ (and that you combine two women in the bond of marriage) which would have made it unlawful in the absolute sense. But, the Holy Qur'ān avoids this lexical brevity for the sake of a longer narration, the detail of which extends to as much as two full verses. This treatment also indicates that the verse: وَأَنْ تَجْمَعُوا بَيْنَ الْأُخْتَيْنِ (that you combine two sisters in the bond of marriage - 4:23) is, in a way, suggesting the justification of combining more than one woman in the bond of marriage which is quite permissible with the condition that they should not be sisters of each other.

Verses 131-134

وَلِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ ۗ وَلَقَدْ وَصَّيْنَا الَّذِينَ

أُوتُوا الْكِتٰبَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ وَإِيَّاكُمْ أَنِ اتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ ۚ وَإِنْ تَكْفُرُوا
فَإِنَّ لِلّٰهِ مَا فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِى الْأَرْضِ ۚ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ غَنِيًّا
حَمِيدًا ﴿١٣١﴾ وَلِلّٰهِ مَا فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِى الْأَرْضِ ۚ وَكَفٰى
بِاللّٰهِ وَكِيلًا ﴿١٣٢﴾ إِنْ يَشَأْ يُذْهِبْكُمْ أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ وَيَأْتِ
بِاٰخَرِينَ ۚ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ عَلٰى ذٰلِكَ قَدِيرًا ﴿١٣٣﴾ مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيدُ
ثَوَابَ الدُّنْيَا فَعِنْدَ اللّٰهِ ثَوَابُ الدُّنْيَا وَالْاٰخِرَةِ ۚ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ
سَمِيعًا بَصِيرًا ﴿١٣٤﴾

And to Allah belongs what is in the heavens and what is in the earth. And We have ordered those who were given the Book before you, and (ordered) you yourselves to fear Allah. And if you disbelieve, then, surely to Allah belongs what is in the heaven and what is in the earth. And Allah is All-Independent, Every-Praised. [131] **And to Allah belongs what is in the heavens and what is in the earth. And Allah is enough to trust in.** [132]

If He so wills, He can make you go, O men, and bring others in. And Allah has the power to do that. [133]

Whoever seeks the return of this world, then, with Allah is the return of this world and of the Hereafter. And Allah is All-Hearing, All-Seeing. [134]

Sequence

After having stated the rules of behaviour as related to women and orphans, the text now reminds the promise of rewards for those abiding by these rules, and the warning for those contravening them, which is the usual style of the Holy Qur'ān.

Significant Inferences

Readily noticeable here is the repetition of لِلّٰهِ مَا فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِى الْأَرْضِ which means that everything created in the heavens and the earth belongs to Allah. Repeated thrice, these words signify three shades of meaning. In the first place, the aim is to point out to the limitless scope of Allah's power of creation which lacks nothing. In the second instance, the objective is to focus on Allah's attribute of self-

sufficiency, self-adequacy and His being need-free. It means: Should one disbelieve, deny or reject the good counsel given, He is in no need of anyone's obedience for He stands ever-praised in His pristine glory. The third mention of these words embodies a statement of Allah's mercy which makes things work for people. It means: Should one fear Allah and be obedient to Him, Allah will fulfill all his needs, because He is the owner of every thing in this universe.

The third verse (133) gives a clear and conclusive statement that Almighty Allah is fully capable of eliminating such people by withdrawing them from the scene of life and replacing them with others, submitting and obedient. This too goes on to prove that Allah is above and beyond any need and that the disobedient ones must themselves shudder at their obduracy and correct their untenable stand.

Verse 135

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا كُونُوا قَوَّٰمِينَ بِٱلْقِسْطِ شُهَدَآءَ لِلَّهِ وَلَوْ
عَلَىٰٓ أَنفُسِكُمْ أَوِ ٱلْوَٰلِدَيْنِ وَٱلْأَقْرَبِينَ ۚ إِن يَكُنْ غَنِيًّا أَوْ فَقِيرًا
فَٱللَّهُ أَوْلَىٰ بِهِمَا ۖ فَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا ٱلْهَوَىٰٓ أَن تَعْدِلُوا ۚ وَإِن تَلْوُۥٓا
أَوْ تُعْرِضُوا فَإِنَّ ٱللَّهَ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرًا ﴿١٣٥﴾

O those who believe, be upholders of justice - witnesses for Allah, even though against (the interest of) yourselves or the parents, and the kinsmen. One may be rich or poor, Allah is better caretaker of both. So do not follow desires, lest you should swerve. And if you twist or avoid (the evidence), then, Allah is all-aware of what you do. [135]

The real purpose of sending prophets and scriptures

In this verse of Sūrah Al-Nisā', all Muslims have been instructed to uphold justice and be true when appearing as witnesses. Besides, things which can become impediments to the establishment of justice or the availability of true evidence have been removed in a highly eloquent manner. A verse of Sūrah al-Mā'idah (Volume 3) which will follow immediately after the completion of Sūrah al-Nisā' carries the same subject. In fact, their words are nearly common. Then, there is a verse in Sūrah al-Ḥadīd which tells us that the important purpose of

sending Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام as the viceregent of Allah in this world followed by other blessed prophets one after the other with the same status alongwith Scriptures and Missions was to see that justice prevails in the world with peace coming in its wake. The objective was to have every human being as a distinct individual adopt justice as his or her hallmark within his or her circle of influence or control. As for the chronically contumacious who would not take to the path of justice and fairness through good counsel, education and communication and continue being dogged in their contumacy, then, they will be the ones who have to be compelled to observe justice through legal process and due penalization and punishment.

The words of this verse from Sūrah Al-Ḥadīd (57:25) are as follows:

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا رُسُلَنَا بِالْبَيِّنٰتِ وَأَنْزَلْنَا مَعَهُمُ الْكِتٰبَ وَالْمِيْزَانَ لِيَقُوْمَ النَّاسُ بِالْقِسْطِ وَأَنْزَلْنَا الْحَدِيْدَ فِيْهِ بَأْسٌ شَدِيْدٌ وَّمَنَافِعُ لِلنَّاسِ

We have sent Our messengers with clear signs and We have sent with them the Book and the Balance so that people stand firm with justice and we sent the iron in which there is great awe, and benefits for people.

Thus we know that the system under which Prophets and Books were sent was basically aimed at establishing justice. The reference to sending down iron at the end of the verse hints towards the eventuality when the good counsel alone would not be enough to make people abide by justice. Instead, there would still be some compulsive miscreants who must be disciplined with the deterrent of iron, chains and bars and other weapons, in the best interest of establishing justice.

Abiding by justice is not for the government alone.

Now, we have before us the present verse Sūrah al-Nisā' (4:135), and verse 8 of Sūrah al-Mā'idah (5) -

كُوْنُوْا قَوّٰمِيْنَ لِلّٰهِ شُهَدَآءَ بِالْقِسْطِ وَلَا يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ شَنَاٰنُ قَوْمٍ عَلٰٓى أَلَّا تَعْدِلُوْا اِعْدِلُوْا هُوَ أَقْرَبُ لِلتَّقْوٰى وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ خَبِيْرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ

Be steadfast for Allah as witnesses for justice. And malice against a people should not bid you to not doing justice. Do justice. That is nearer to Taqwā. And fear Allah. Surely, Allah is all-aware of what you do. (5:8)

as well as the verse from Sūrah al-Ḥadīd (57:25) cited immediately above. In these verses, it has been clearly stated that establishing and maintaining justice and being steadfast on it is not simply the duty of governments and courts. The instruction has been given to every human being obligating him or her to fulfill the demands of justice by being personally firm about it and, at the same time, by making efforts that others too stay equally firm about seeing justice done. However, a certain level of justice does fall in the jurisdiction of government and its officials when the wicked, the rebellious and the contumacious challenge and confront the processes of justice by flouting it personally as well as by stopping others to carry out its dictates. On such occasions, penalization and punishment do become necessary. This enforcement of justice, obviously, can be done only by government which holds the reins of power in its hands.

In the world today, leave alone the illiterate millions, even fairly educated people think that the dispensing of justice is the sole duty of governments and courts and the masses of people are not responsible for it. This attitude is one of the major reasons which has made the government and the people act as two confronting parties in every country and every state. As a result, a gulf of conflict divides the rulers and the ruled. Masses of people from every country demand and expect justice and fairness from their government but, strangely enough, are not themselves ready and eager to uphold justice. The outcome is all too visible everywhere in the world. Law stands on hold. Crime wave rides high. No doubt, we have law-making bodies in every country costing millions. When elections come, the furore created to elect representatives really shakes God's earth. Then, these elected few, being supposedly the cream of the whole country, go on to make laws with great concern and caution keeping in view the needs and sentiments of their electorate. Then, the law is put forth for public opinion. When favourable, the law is considered enforceable. Then, the whole machinery of the government with its countless departments and experienced personal goes about enforcing the law so made. Now, this is a window to the custom-ridden world we live in. We have to look afresh and aim higher. In order to do something like this, we have to shake off from the torpor of blind following, the following of self-promoting custodians of civilization, and we shall, then, realize that

things are not as bright as we are being made to see.

Compare the state of affairs for a hundred years from now, say 1857-1957. The data will confirm that with every increase in law-making, there increased the exhibition of popular will in law and a corresponding increase in the machinery of law enforcement. One kind of police sprouted out in many more kinds resulting in a more than matching increase in ever-escalating crimes causing people to remain far more deprived of justice. With this graph of conditions rising up, more disorder in the world started showing up.

Belief in the Hereafter and the fear of God: The only guarantee of universal peace

The world is waiting for someone sensitive and discerning who would cross over the barriers of customised routines and seriously consider the message brought by the Arabian messenger ﷺ and deliberate in the reality of things as they are. Peace in the world has never been achieved through penal codes, nor will it ever be. The guarantee of universal peace can be delivered by nothing but the belief in the Hereafter and the fear of God. This twosome is the channel through which all obligations of the ruler and the ruled, masses and the government merge together on a common platform. Everyone starts pulsating with the crucial sense of individual responsibility. When it comes to respecting and defending law, the masses of people cannot get away by saying that this was the job of the officials. It will be noticed that the verses of the Holy Qur'ān dealing with the establishment of justice as cited above end with an exhortation to this very revolutionary article of faith.

The present verse of Sūrah al-Nisā' ends with the reminder: إِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ خَبِيْرًا (Allah is all-aware of what you do). At the end of the verse from Sūrah al-Mā'idah, first came the instruction to observe *Taqwā*, the fear of Allah, after which it was said: إِنَّ اللّٰهَ خَبِيْرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ (Allah is aware of what you do). Then, at the end of Sūrah al-Ḥadīd, it was said: إِنَّ اللّٰهَ قَوِيٌّ عَزِيْزٌ (Allah is powerful, mighty).

Seen together, these three verses do not rest at giving instructions to both officials and masses that they should not only uphold and establish justice personally but should also see that others too do that. These verses go further ahead through their concluding statements

whereby they focus all attention to a decisive reality which has the potential to generate a great revolution in human life and its aspirations. This, in a few words, is the realization of the power and domain of Almighty Allah, the thought of having to be present before Him, and of reckoning, and of retribution. This was, again in a nutshell, the secret behind the peace which prevailed in the less-educated world a hundred years ago as compared with what we have in our day; and, infact, it is the abandoning of such a valuable teaching that has deprived the modern progress-claiming, high-flying and satellite-borne world from the blessings of genuine peace on earth.

It is in the best interest of the liberal people of the world to realize that science and its progress can take them to all sorts of frontiers - they can climb the skies, camp on stars and visit the depths of seas - but, the real end-product of all these high-tech equipments and efforts is something which they would fail to find on far away stars or in ever new inventions. This is still there for seekers to find. It is there, clear and true as ever, in the message brought by the Prophet ﷺ who appeared in Arabia, may our lives be ransomed for him and may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, within the message and teaching of his, that of believing in Allah and believing in the life-to-come and its reckoning:

أَلَا بِذِكْرِ اللّٰهِ تَطْمَئِنُّ الْقُلُوْبُ

"Listen! Hearts rest at peace through the *Dhikr* (remembrance) of Allah." (13:28)

Day by day, the astonishing discoveries of science do no more than confirm the most perfect power of Almighty Allah and go on to clearly demonstrate the state-of-the-art mastery of His creation which has no match. Before the skill and range of such creativity, every human claim to progress stands humbled - as the famous Persian line: چه سود چوں دل دانا و چشم بینا نیشت seems to ask: If you have no wisdom and no vision, what is the use of doing what you do?

Recapitulating, we can say that the Holy Qur'ān has, on the one hand, declared the establishment of justice and fairness as the very purpose of a universal order in the world while, on the other hand, it has proposed a unique system which - if adopted and put into practice

- would metamorphose this very blood-thirsty and iniquitous world into a society of virtuous people which, in turn, would become Paradise now, instant and cash, much earlier than the promised Paradise of the Hereafter. In fact, one of the explanations given regarding the verse of the Qur'ān: وَلِمَنْ خَافَ مَقَامَ رَبِّهِ جَنَّتٰنِ : 'And for one who fears the high station of his or her *Rabb* (Lord), there will be two Paradises' is exactly what has been stated above. That is, the God-fearing will have two Paradises, one in the Hereafter and the other right here in this world. There is nothing Utopian about the idea. That it is feasible has been already demonstrated by the great harbinger of this message, the Holy Prophet of Islam, upon him the blessings of Allah, and peace. He has bequeathed this message to posterity, not as some unproven theory, but as a practical and functioning system. Then, after him, came al-Khulafā' al-Rāshidūn, the rightly-guided Caliphs and many more from among the rulers who followed the Sunnah of the noble Prophet of Islam strictly. As and when they acted in accordance with the principles set for them, the lion and the lamb were seen drinking at the same water trough, an imaginary saying for the ideal climate of justice for all, the strong and the weak, the poor and the rich, the labourer and the capitalist. Totally eliminated was whatever difference there could be between human beings. Law was respected by every individual in bolted homes and in the darkness of nights. This is no fairy tale. These are facts of authentic history widely corroborated and confessed, even by open-minded non-Muslims.

After understanding the essence of the Qur'ānic system, detailed explanation of the verse is given below.

Explanation

The verse under reference opens with the words: كُوْنُوْا قَوّٰمِيْنَ بِالْقِسْطِ (... be upholders of justice). The word, *Qisṭ*, when it begins with *Kasrah* on *Qāf*, (the vowel point for i), it means justice and fairness. The true sense of justice and fairness is that every holder of a right should be given his or her due in full. Taken generally, it includes the rights of Allah (*Ḥuqūqullāh*) and all kinds of human rights as well. Inclusive in the thrust of the meaning of 'upholding justice' (*qiyām bi l'qisṭ*) is that nobody shall inflict injustice on anybody; also that the perpetrator of injustice (*ẓālim*) shall be stopped from inflicting injustice (*ẓulm*) and

the victim of injustice (*maẓlūm*) shall be supported; and also that appearing as witness shall not be avoided, if witness is needed to help the victim of injustice to have his or her usurped right back; and also that the witness shall be true and factual as it really is, whether for or against anyone; and also that those who hold the reins of authority and dispensation of justice in their hands shall treat both parties to the case before them, equally and equitably. There shall be no tilt of any sort toward any one of the two. Statements given by witnesses shall be heard carefully. Every effort possible shall be made to investigate the case. Then, finally, perfect justice shall be observed in the verdict.

Impediments to Justice

Though the two verses from Sūrah al-Nisā' and Sūrah al-Mā'idah quoted earlier come from two different chapters, yet their subject is almost the common denominator between them. The only difference is that justice is normally impeded, obstructed or compromised by two things. Firstly, by love, kinship or friendship or link with someone which pushes the witness to testify in his favour so that he remains shielded against loss or that he profits by it. As for the judge or Qāḍī who is to give the verdict is affected by any such linkage, he would naturally have the urge to decide the case in favour of the party of his linkage. Secondly, justice is impeded by hostility towards someone which may take the witness to testify against him, while it could also become the cause of an unfavourable judgement given by the judge or Qāḍī. So, love and hate are passions which can cause one to move away from the path of justice and become involved with all sorts of injustice and oppression. These very two impediments have been removed in both the verses of Sūrah al-Nisā' and Sūrah al-Mā'idah. The instruction given in the verse of Sūrah al-Nisā' is about removing the impediment of kinship or nearness. It has been said there: أَوِ الْوَالِدَيْنِ وَالْأَقْرَبِيْنَ (4:135) which means: even if your testimony goes against your parents or near relatives, say what is true and ignore the factor of such relationship when testifying the truth. And removed through the verse of Sūrah al-Mā'idah is the impediment of grudge, malice or enmity. So, there it was said: وَلَا يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ شَنَاٰنُ قَوْمٍ عَلٰٓى اَلَّا تَعْدِلُوْا اِعْدِلُوْا هُوَ اَقْرَبُ لِلتَّقْوٰى (And malice against a people should not bid you to not doing justice. Do justice. That is nearer to *Taqwā* - 5:2). As clear from the translation, it means

that malice should not make one desert the path of justice and go about testifying or ruling against them.

In addition to that, there is a slight difference between the form of address and the mode of expression appearing in these two verses. In Sūrah al-Nisā', it was said: قَوّٰمِيْنَ بِالْقِسْطِ شُهَدَآءَ لِلّٰهِ (...upholders of justice, witnesses for Allah - 4:135) while the words from Sūrah al-Mā'idah are: قَوّٰمِيْنَ لِلّٰهِ شُهَدَآءَ بِالْقِسْطِ (... be steadfast for Allah as witnesses for justice - 5:8). To explain, we can say that the first verse contains two instructions: Uphold justice and witness for Allah. As for the second verse, the same two things have been commanded but with a changed form of address, that is, 'be steadfast for Allah and witnesses for justice.'

Most commentators say that this change in address shows that both these things are two interpretations of the same reality. At one place, it was referred to as being steadfast with justice and witnesses for Allah, while at another, the word arrangement was: Steadfast for Allah and witnesses for justice. Moreover, worth noticing is the mode of expression adopted in both these verses where multiple-worded sentences such as كُوْنُوْا قَوّٰمِيْنَ بِالْقِسْطِ or قَوّٰمِيْنَ لِلّٰهِ have been preferred, although the command to do justice could have been given through the use of one single word: اَقْسِطُوْا : *Aqsiṭū*: Do justice (as in Sūrah Al-Ḥujurāt, - 49:9). Actually, the choice of the longer sentence is there to indicate that being just and fair in a particular case accidentally does not liquidate one's responsibility wholly. The reason is that being able to do justice in one or the other case is a natural possibility which can apply even to the most evil and tyrannical ruler who may find himself having done justice in some case. So, by the use of the word, *qawwāmīn* (those who uphold and are steadfast), it has been established that upholding justice and fairness is a constant duty which must be observed at all times, under all conditions, for every friend or foe.

Qur'ānic Principles of Universal Justice

Now, concluding our discussion about the meanings of verse 135 in conjunction with verse 8 of Sūrah al-Mā'idah, it can be safely said that the principles of universal justice by one and all enunciated through these two verses form part of the many distinctions of the glorious

Qur'ān. These can be better appreciated when seen through two major aspects as given below:

1. To begin with, officials and masses of people have all been alerted to the supreme subdueing power of Almighty Allah and to the ultimate reckoning of the fateful Day of Retribution so that they could think, stop and deter or be prepared to face the consequences. In view of this, the masses themselves have to respect law, and the officials who are responsible for the enforcement of law, they too, have to keep the thought of Allah and *Ākhirah* (God and the Hereafter) before them while enforcing law and thus be the servants and not the thoughtless masters of God's multitudes of people. They should make law a source of service to people and a source of betterment of the whole world, never causing their worries to increase, never engineering ways to condemn victims of injustice to their grinding mills of red tape, never making them suffer from injustice multiplied with more injustices, and finally, never ever selling law for mean desires or paltry gains. By saying: Be steadfast for Allah - witnesses for Allah, both officials and masses have been exhorted to act for Allah and act with sincerity at its best.

2. The second element of importance here is that the responsibility of establishing justice and fairness as a way of life has been placed on the shoulders of all human beings. As for the verses from Sūrah al-Nisā' and Sūrah al-Mā'idah wherein, by saying: يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا (O those who believe), the entire Muslim community has been addressed. But, in Sūrah al-Ḥadīd, by saying: لِيَقُوْمَ النَّاسُ بِالْقِسْطِ (so that mankind stands firm with justice - 57:25), this duty has been considered binding on all human beings. Similarly, by saying: وَلَوْ عَلٰٓى اَنْفُسِكُمْ (even though against yourselves...), instruction has been given that justice is not something to be demanded from others only, instead, it should also be exacted from one's own self. It means that one should say nothing against what is true and just, even when one has to declare something against one's own self, even if such an action is likely to bring loss upon one's person, because this loss is insignificant, tiny and transitory. On the contrary, should someone elect to placate his self by flat lies, then he has bought for himself the severe punishment of the Day of Retribution.

Verses 136-137

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا آمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَالْكِتَابِ الَّذِي نَزَّلَ
عَلَىٰ رَسُولِهِ وَالْكِتَابِ الَّذِي أَنزَلَ مِن قَبْلُ ۚ وَمَن يَكْفُرْ بِاللَّهِ
وَمَلَائِكَتِهِ وَكُتُبِهِ وَرُسُلِهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ ضَلَالًا
بَعِيدًا ﴿١٣٦﴾ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا ثُمَّ كَفَرُوا ثُمَّ آمَنُوا ثُمَّ كَفَرُوا ثُمَّ
ازْدَادُوا كُفْرًا لَّمْ يَكُنِ اللَّهُ لِيَغْفِرَ لَهُمْ وَلَا لِيَهْدِيَهُمْ
سَبِيلًا ﴿١٣٧﴾

O those who believe, do believe in Allah and His Messenger and in the Book He has revealed to His Messenger and in the Books He has revealed earlier. And whoever disbelieves in Allah and His angels and His Books and His Messengers and the Last Day has indeed gone far astray. [136]

Surely, those who believed and then disbelieved, believed again and then disbelieved, then went on increasing in their disbelief - Allah is not to forgive them nor lead them on the path. [137]

Sequence

Discussed upto this point were subsidiary injunctions mostly, alongwith issues relating to faith (*'Īmān*) and disbelief (*kufr*) appearing as a corollary to dealings with antagonists. Onwards from here, these issues appear in some detail continuing almost close to the end of the Sūrah. In the sequence of statements, first comes a description of *'Īmān* (faith) as credible in the sight of the Sharī'ah. After that, various groups of disbelievers have been censured for their beliefs and for some of their deeds also which issue forth from their faulty beliefs.

Important Notes

1. The first part of the verse 137 which begins with the words: إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا ثُمَّ كَفَرُوا (Surely, those who believed and then disbelieved, believed again and then disbelieved, then went on increasing in their disbelief) refers to the hypocrites. But, some commentators say that this verse is about the Jews for they were the ones who first believed, then, after having taken to the golden calf, became disbelievers. After that, they repented and believed. Then again, they rejected the prophethood of

Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه الصلوة والسلام and fell back into disbelief. Finally, by refusing to believe in the prophethood of Sayyidnā Muḥammad ﷺ, they further increased in their disbelief (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī).

2. The second part of the verse 137 لَمْ يَكُنِ اللّٰهُ لِيَغْفِرَ لَهُمْ وَلَا لِيَهْدِيَهُمْ سَبِيْلًا (-- Allah is not to forgive them nor lead them on the path), when read as a whole with the first part, would mean that their repeated return to disbelief will cause their very ability to receive true guidance to be taken away from them and, in that event, they will have neither the future option to repent nor the opportunity to believe. Otherwise, the general rule laid out by the definitive texts of the Qur'ān and Sunnah is that a disbeliever (*kāfir*) or an apostate (*murtadd*), no matter how hardened, has his past sins forgiven -- if the *taubah* (repentance) made by him is sincere and true. So, if such people too change and repent, the law of amnesty and forgiveness is open.

Verses 138-141

بَشِّرِ الْمُنٰفِقِيْنَ بِاَنَّ لَهُمْ عَذَابًا اَلِيْمَا ﴿١٣٨﴾ اِلَّذِيْنَ يَتَّخِذُوْنَ
الْكٰفِرِيْنَ اَوْلِيَآءَ مِنْ دُوْنِ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ؕ اَيَبْتَغُوْنَ عِنْدَهُمُ الْعِزَّةَ
فَاِنَّ الْعِزَّةَ لِلّٰهِ جَمِيْعًا ﴿١٣٩﴾ وَقَدْ نَزَّلَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِي الْكِتٰبِ اَنْ
اِذَا سَمِعْتُمْ اٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ يُكْفَرُ بِهَا وَيُسْتَهْزَاُ بِهَا فَلَا تَقْعُدُوْا
مَعَهُمْ حَتّٰى يَخُوْضُوْا فِيْ حَدِيْثٍ غَيْرِهٖ ۚ اِنَّكُمْ اِذًا مِّثْلُهُمْ ؕ اِنَّ
اللّٰهَ جَامِعُ الْمُنٰفِقِيْنَ وَالْكٰفِرِيْنَ فِيْ جَهَنَّمَ جَمِيْعَا ﴿١٤٠﴾ اِلَّذِيْنَ
يَتَرَبَّصُوْنَ بِكُمْ ۚ فَاِنْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فَتْحٌ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ قَالُوْٓا اَلَمْ نَكُنْ
مَّعَكُمْ ۚ وَاِنْ كَانَ لِلْكٰفِرِيْنَ نَصِيْبٌ قَالُوْٓا اَلَمْ نَسْتَحْوِذْ عَلَيْكُمْ
وَنَمْنَعْكُمْ مِّنَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ؕ فَاللّٰهُ يَحْكُمُ بَيْنَكُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ ؕ وَلَنْ
يَّجْعَلَ اللّٰهُ لِلْكٰفِرِيْنَ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ سَبِيْلًا ﴿١٤١﴾

Give the hypocrites the good news that for them there is a painful punishment [138] **- those who take the disbelievers for friends rather than the believers. Are they seeking honour in their company? But, indeed, all honour belongs to Allah,** [139] **and He has revealed to you in the Book that when you hear the verses of Allah**

being disbelieved and ridiculed you should not sit with them unless they enter into some other discourse. You, in that case, would be like them. Surely, Allah is to gather all hypocrites and disbelievers in *Jahannam* [140] **- those who look for (a misfortune for) you, so, if there is a victory for you, they say, "Were we not with you?" And if there is a gain for the disbelievers, they say (to them) "Had we not overpowered you, still protected you from the believers?" So, Allah will decide between you on the Doomsday. And Allah shall never give the disbelievers a way against the believers.** [141]

Commentary

In the first verse (138), the hypocrites have been given the news of a painful punishment. By articulating a distressing news with the word, '*bashārah*' (good news), the hint given is that everyone looks forward to some good news to brighten his or her future but, for the hypocrites, there is just no other news except this.

Seek Honour from Allah alone

Close friendly relations with disbelievers and polytheists have been forbidden in the second verse (139). Warning has been served on those who do so. Right along, after giving the reason why people get involved with this disease, the practice has been declared ineffectual and absurd. The words of the text are: أَيَبْتَغُونَ عِندَهُمُ الْعِزَّةَ فَإِنَّ الْعِزَّةَ لِلَّهِ جَمِيعًا (139) (Are they seeking honour in their company? But, indeed, all honour belongs to Allah). To explain, we can say that the urge to meet and be friendly with disbelievers and polytheists is generally prompted by the assumption that their outwardly visible influence, power and collective strength may give honour and power to those who have close relations with them. Almighty Allah has exposed the reality behind this absurd notion by saying : You want to acquire honour from those who themselves have no honour. *'Izzah* (عِزَّة) which means might and mastery, belongs to none but Allah and whenever some sort of might and mastery is given to any person, it is given by Allah. With the scheme of things being such, it would certainly be a gross lack of reason to go about acquiring honour by displeasing the owner and giver of real honour and stooping down to the level of scroungers for temporal honour through His enemies?

The same subject has appeared in the Qur'ānic Sūrah al-Munāfiqūn with one addition as follows:

وَلِلّٰهِ الْعِزَّةُ وَلِرَسُوْلِهٖ وَلِلْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ وَلٰكِنَّ الْمُنٰفِقِيْنَ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ

For Allah is all honour, and for His Messenger, and for believers - but, the hypocrites do not know. 63:8.

By adding the messenger and the believers with Almighty Allah in this verse, it has been emphasized that Allah is the only owner-possessor of real honour and it is He Who bestows on whosoever He wills a certain part of that honour. Since the Messenger of Allah and those who believe in them are dear in the sight of Allah, therefore, honour and mastery are given to them. As for the disbelievers and the polytheists, they themselves do not have this kind of honour, then, what sort of honour can one get by acting in league with them? Therefore, Sayyidnā 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ said:

مَنِ اعْتَزَّ بِالْعَبِيْدِ اَذَلَّهُ اللّٰهُ

Whoever seeks honour through human beings (His servants) is disgraced by Allah. (Jaṣṣāṣ)

As in Mustadrak al-Ḥākim, Sayyidnā 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ said to Sayyidnā Abū 'Ubaydah, the Governor of Syria:

كُنْتُمْ اَقَلَّ النَّاسِ وَاَذَلَّ النَّاسِ فَكَثَّرَكُمْ بِالْاِسْلَامِ، وَكُنْتُمْ اَذَلَّ النَّاسِ فَاَعَزَّكُمُ اللّٰهُ بِالْاِسْلَامِ مَهْمَا تَطْلُبُوا الْعِزَّةَ بِغَيْرِ اللّٰهِ يُذِلَّكُمُ اللّٰهُ .

You were the lowest (in numbers) and the weakest (in strength) among the people (of the world), then Allah made you exceed in numbers and strength with (the grace of) Islam; and you were the meanest (in status) among the people (of the world), then Allah raised you in honour with (the grace of) Islam. So, understand this very clearly: If you seek honour from any source other than Allah, Allah will disgrace you.

Explaining the meaning of this verse, the famous commentator, Abū Bakr al-Jaṣṣāṣ has said in Aḥkām al-Qur'ān that the verse forbids the seeking of honour through friendship with disbelievers and sinners. However, the seeking of honour and power through Muslims is not forbidden because this verse of Sūrah al-Munāfiqūn has made it clear that Almighty Allah has blessed His messenger and the believers

with honour. (Jaṣṣāṣ, p. 352, v.2)

If the *'Izzah* or honour mentioned here means the everlasting honour of the life-to-come, the *'Ākhirah,* then, its applicability to Allah's messenger and the believers in the life of the present world is quite obvious, for the honour of the *'Ākhirah* can never become the lot of any disbeliever or polytheist. Conversely, if it is taken to mean honour in the present life of the world, then, barring transitional periods and accidental happenings, this honour and mastery is, ultimately, the right of Islam and Muslims alone. Until such time that Muslims remained Muslims in the true sense, the whole world witnessed the spectacle. Then, there shall be the later period when Muslims will reassemble around true Islam under the leadership of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام ascendancy will again be theirs. That Muslims appear to be weak during the interim period, because of their weakness of faith and involvement with sins, does not go against it.

In the third verse (140): وَقَدْ نَزَّلَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِى الْكِتٰبِ (... and He has revealed to you in the Book), by referring to another verse of the Holy Qur'ān which had already been revealed as a verse of the Sūrah al-An'ām before the event of Hijrah in Makkah al-Mukkarrmah, it has been re-emphasized that Allah had sent, much earlier, the command that they should not even sit in the company of disbelievers and sinners. Now, surprising as it is, these heedless people have gone much beyond that by establishing friendly relations with them assuming that they were the bearers of honour and the wielders of power in their own right.

The verse of Sūrah al-Nisā' under discussion (140) and the verse of Sūrah al-An'ām (68) which has been referred to in the Sūrah al-Nisā' both carry the same sense. That is, should some people sitting in a group be engaged in denying and deriding the verses revealed by Allah, then, as long as they stay occupied with this vain exercise, sitting in their company to participate or observe is also forbidden (*ḥarām*). However, the words of Sūrah al-An'ām have some generalization, and a little more detail for it says:

وَاِذَا رَاَيْتَ الَّذِيْنَ يَخُوْضُوْنَ فِىٓ اٰيٰتِنَا فَاَعْرِضْ عَنْهُمْ حَتّٰى يَخُوْضُوْا فِىْ
حَدِيْثٍ غَيْرِهٖ وَاِمَّا يُنْسِيَنَّكَ الشَّيْطٰنُ فَلَا تَقْعُدْ بَعْدَ الذِّكْرٰى مَعَ الْقَوْمِ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ

And when you see those who indulge in Our verses adversely,

> turn away from them, until such time that they may get busy with some subject other than that. And if Satan makes you forget, do not sit with the unjust people after the recollection. (6:68)

Here, in the verse cited above, the reference is to disputation in Divine verses which includes disbelief and mockery as well. Also included here is the act of distorting the meaning of a verse, that is, deducing such meanings from the verses of the Holy Qur'ān which are contrary to the *tafsīr* or explanation given by the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his blessed Companions, or are against the consensus of the Muslim Community. Therefore, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ, as reported by Ḍaḥḥāk, has said that included within the sense of this verse are those who explain the Qur'ān (*tafsīr*) erroneously or distort its meaning (*taḥrīf*) or invent what is not there (*bid'ah*). The actual words of this report are being given below:

دَخَلَ فِيْ هٰذِهِ الْاٰيَةِ كُلُّ مُحْدِثٍ فِى الدِّيْنِ، وَكُلُّ مُبْتَدِعٍ اِلٰى يَوْمِ الْقِيٰمَةِ

(Maẓhari, p.263, v.2)

The impermissibility of listening to opinion-based explanations of the Holy Qur'ān:

From here we find out that a person who, while talking, explaining or teaching the Holy Qur'ān, is not observant of the exegetical authenticity credited to the most righteous elders of the early period (i.e. the Companions of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم or their pupils) instead, indulges in giving meanings of the Qur'ān contrary to those stated by them, then, participation in the *Dars* (teaching sessions) or *Tafsīr* (Exegesis) of such a person shall be impermissible under the authority of the Qur'ān, being a sin rather than a source of reward. In Tafsīr al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ, Abū Ḥayyān has said: These verses tell us that what is sinful to say verbally remains equally sinful when heard through the ears voluntarily. He has even put it in a poetic exhortation:

وَسَمْعَكَ صُنْ عَنْ سِمَاعِ الْقَبِيْحِ　　كَصَوْنِ اللِّسَانِ عَنِ النُّطْقِ بِهٖ

Protect your ears from hearing the evil
As you protect your tongue from saying it.

After looking at the element of some generalization in the verse of Sūrah al-An'ām, we can now turn to the other element of additional

remarks about the possibility of someone having joined the company of such people unknowingly. In that case, once it is realised, the person should immediately leave that gathering. The point is that one should not sit with unjust people when alerted to the situation.

Now, in both verses of Sūrah al-Nisā' and Sūrah al-An'ām, it has been declared that as long as they remain occupied with their cross-comments, sitting in their company is forbidden. Here, we face another aspect of the problem which is: When they stop talking in that particular strain and digress to some other topic, would sitting with them and taking part in mutual discourse at that time become permissible, or not? The Qur'ān has elected not to be explicit on this situation, therefore, on this subject, there is a difference of views among scholars. Some have said that the reason for this prohibition was the disparagement and distortion of Divine verses - when that stopped, the prohibition stopped too. Therefore, once they start talking about something else, sitting in their company is no sin. Some others have said that (sitting in) the company of such disbelieving, sinning and unjust people is not correct even after that. This is the position taken by Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, may the mercy of Allah be upon him, the argument in support of his position comes from the following sentence of Sūrah al-An'ām: فَلَا تَقْعُدْ بَعْدَ الذِّكْرٰى مَعَ الْقَوْمِ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ It means: Once you remember, do not sit with the unjust people. It is obvious that an unjust person remains what he is even after having terminated the questionable conversation. Therefore, abstaining from sitting in his company is necessary. (Jaṣṣāṣ)

Qāḍī Thanāullāh Pānipatī has, in his al-Tafsīr al-Maẓharī, found consistency in both views by saying that should comments laced with disbelief, mockery and distortion of the Qur'ān cease and be replaced by some other topic of conversation, then, even at that time, sitting unnecessarily in the company of such people shall, after all, remain forbidden. But, should such participation be prompted by some religious contingency or physical need, it would be permissible.

Seclusion is better than bad company

Imām Abū Bakr al-Jaṣṣāṣ has said in Aḥkām al-Qur'ān: Should a Muslim, who is charged with the duty of forbidding the evil, witness sin being committed in a gathering, then, he should stop it by force, if

he has the strength to do that. And should he be lacking in this capability, then, he should, in the least, show his displeasure, the lowest degree of which is that he should rise and leave such company. This is the reason why Sayyidnā 'Umar ibn 'Abdul-'Azīz had some people arrested on the charge that they were drinking wine. On investigation, it was found that one of them was fasting. He did not drink the wine, but he was sitting in the company of those drunkards. Sayyidnā 'Umar ibn 'Abdul-'Azīz punished him too for his unexplained sitting in that sort of company. (al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ p.375, v.3)

It is useful to know that Ibn Kathīr has reported at this point in his *Tafsīr* the following ḥadīth from the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم where he has said:

مَنْ كَانَ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللّٰهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ فَلَا يَجْلِسْ عَلٰى مَآئِدَةٍ يُدَارُ عَلَيْهَا الْخَمْرُ

> One who believes in Allah and the Last Day should not sit to dine where liquor is being served. (Ibn Kathīr, p.567, v.1)

What has been said about leaving a gathering as part of a debated issue summarized above is hemmed by a condition. The condition is that leaving such a gathering shall not entail some sin according to Sharī'ah. For example, joining the *Jama'ah* (congregation) in a *Masjid* is necessary. Should something contrary to the Sharī'ah start happening there, one should not abandon praying with the Jama'ah because of that; instead, simple emotional displeasure against what is undesirable shall be considered sufficient. Similarly, there could be some other gathering the necessity of which stands proved in the Sharī'ah. If some people there start doing things which are contrary to the Sharī'ah, then, leaving that gathering just because of the sin being committed by others would amount to committing a sin of your own. This is neither reasonable, nor correct. Therefore, Ḥasan al-Baṣrī said: If we were to keep giving up what we must do just because of the sins of other people, we shall be paving the way for all sorts of sinners to come and destroy the Sunnah and Sharī'ah.

To Sum Up

The nature of socialization with disbelieving or falsely-believing people takes some of the following forms:

1. By condescending to their infidelistic assaults. This is infi-

delity (*kufr*).

2. By showing repugnance when confronted with open expressions of disbelief. This, if done without a valid excuse admitted by the Sharī'ah, is '*fisq*' or sinfulness, contrary to the required behaviour of unalloyed righteousness.

3. For some worldly need. This is allowed.

4. To dessiminate injunctions of Islam. This is an act of worship, '*Ībādah*.

5. Under compulsion, exigency or emergency or helplessness (*iḍṭirār*). This is excusable.

Accommodating disbelief is disbelief

Towards the later part of the verse (140), it was said: إِنَّكُمْ إِذًا مِّثْلُهُمْ (You, in that case, would be like them). It means: 'If you kept sitting in such a gathering where the Word of Allah is being rejected or ridiculed or distorted, quite unruffled, almost willingly, then, you too, by becoming an accomplice in their sin, have become like them.' The sense of 'having become like them' can be explained either as: 'God forbid, if your own thoughts and feelings are such that you show your liking for and are satisfied with their expressions of disbelief, then, in reality, you too are a disbeliever (*kāfir*), because liking *kufr* is nothing but *kufr*.' Otherwise, if that is not the case, 'being like them' would mean: 'By your participation in the activity of those who are busy hurting Islam and Muslims through their falsification of the Faith, you too, by your abetment of their conspiracy, have become, God forbid, like them.'

Verses 142 - 144

إِنَّ الْمُنٰفِقِينَ يُخٰدِعُونَ اللّٰهَ وَهُوَ خٰدِعُهُمْ ۚ وَإِذَا قَامُوٓا إِلَى
الصَّلٰوةِ قَامُوا كُسَالٰى ۙ يُرَآءُونَ النَّاسَ وَلَا يَذْكُرُونَ اللّٰهَ إِلَّا
قَلِيلًا ﴿١٤٢﴾ مُّذَبْذَبِينَ بَيْنَ ذٰلِكَ ۖ لَآ إِلٰى هٰٓؤُلَآءِ وَلَآ إِلٰى
هٰٓؤُلَآءِ ۗ وَمَنْ يُّضْلِلِ اللّٰهُ فَلَنْ تَجِدَ لَهُ سَبِيلًا ﴿١٤٣﴾ يٰٓأَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ
اٰمَنُوا لَا تَتَّخِذُوا الْكٰفِرِينَ أَوْلِيَآءَ مِنْ دُونِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ۗ أَتُرِيدُونَ

أَنْ تَجْعَلُوا لِلّٰهِ عَلَيْكُمْ سُلْطٰنًا مُّبِيْنًا ﴿١٤٤﴾

Surely, the hypocrites (try to) deceive Allah while He is the One who leaves them in deception. And when they stand for Ṣalāh, they stand up lazily showing off to the people, and do not remember Allah but a little, [142] **wavering between (this and) that, neither here nor there. And whom Allah lets go astray for him you shall never find a way.** [143] **O those who believe, do not take the disbelievers for friends instead of the believers. Do you want to produce before Allah a clear evidence against yourselves?** [144]

The censure on hypocrites appearing earlier continues through the present verses. Their blameworthy approach to matters of Faith has been clearly identified here and is self-explanatory through the translation given.

Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thānavī has, in his Tafsīr Bayān al-Qur'ān, taken up the question of 'standing up lazily' in the expression: قَامُوْا كُسَالٰى which appears in verse 142 saying: 'The laziness censured here is doctrinal laziness, (that is, slothfulness towards observance of the articles of faith due to lack of true conviction). However, laziness which is there despite correct beliefs stands excluded from the purview of this censure. Then, should this laziness be there due to some excuse, such as, sickness, fatigue or sleepiness, it is not even blameworthy. But, when without excuse, it is.'

Verses 145 - 147

إِنَّ الْمُنٰفِقِيْنَ فِي الدَّرْكِ الْاَسْفَلِ مِنَ النَّارِ وَلَنْ تَجِدَ لَهُمْ نَصِيْرًا ﴿١٤٥﴾ إِلَّا الَّذِيْنَ تَابُوْا وَاَصْلَحُوْا وَاعْتَصَمُوْا بِاللّٰهِ وَاَخْلَصُوْا دِيْنَهُمْ لِلّٰهِ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ مَعَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ؕ وَسَوْفَ يُؤْتِ اللّٰهُ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ اَجْرًا عَظِيْمًا ﴿١٤٦﴾ مَا يَفْعَلُ اللّٰهُ بِعَذَابِكُمْ اِنْ شَكَرْتُمْ وَاٰمَنْتُمْ ؕ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ شَاكِرًا عَلِيْمًا ﴿١٤٧﴾

Surely, the hypocrites are in the lowest level of the Fire, and you shall never find for them a helper [145] **- except those who repent and correct themselves and**

hold on to Allah and make their Faith pure for Allah. So, those are with the believers, and Allah shall give the believers a great reward. [144]

What would Allah get by punishing you, if you are grateful and believe? And Allah is Appreciating, All-Knowing. [147]

The purpose in previous verses was to point out to some ugly traits of the hypocrites, though their punishment of being in Hell with disbelievers was also mentioned as a corollary to another subject.

From this stage onwards, the purpose is to state their punishment clearly. Since the inherent effect of such impending punishment generates a sense of fear in a good-natured person which usually becomes the reason for early repentance, therefore, exemption from punishment has been promised to those who repent alongwith the incentive of good reward for them.

The Meaning of sincerity

The statement: أَخْلَصُوا دِيْنَهُمْ (Make their Faith pure for Allah) in verse 146 shows that a deed in order to be acceptable with Allah has to be free of hypocrisy and exclusively for His sake and pleasure, for Muslim jurists have enunciated the meaning of *Mukhliṣ* (translated with the weaker equivalent 'sincere') as follows:

اَلَّذِیْ یَعْمَلُ لِلّٰہِ لَا یُحِبُّ اَنْ یُّحْمَدَہُ النَّاسُ عَلَیْهِ

A sincere person is one who acts for Allah alone and does not like that people praise him for it. (Maẓharī)

Verses 148 - 152

لَا يُحِبُّ اللّٰهُ الْجَهْرَ بِالسُّوْٓءِ مِنَ الْقَوْلِ اِلَّا مَنْ ظُلِمَ ؕ وَ كَانَ
اللّٰهُ سَمِيْعًا عَلِيْمًا ﴿١٤٨﴾ اِنْ تُبْدُوْا خَيْرًا اَوْ تُخْفُوْهُ اَوْ تَعْفُوْا
عَنْ سُوْٓءٍ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ عَفُوًّا قَدِيْرًا ﴿١٤٩﴾ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ يَكْفُرُوْنَ
بِاللّٰهِ وَرُسُلِهٖ وَيُرِيْدُوْنَ اَنْ يُّفَرِّقُوْا بَيْنَ اللّٰهِ وَ رُسُلِهٖ وَيَقُوْلُوْنَ
نُؤْمِنُ بِبَعْضٍ وَّنَكْفُرُ بِبَعْضٍ ۙ وَّيُرِيْدُوْنَ اَنْ يَّتَّخِذُوْا بَيْنَ ذٰلِكَ
سَبِيْلًا ﴿١٥٠﴾ اُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْكٰفِرُوْنَ حَقًّا ۚ وَاَعْتَدْنَا لِلْكٰفِرِيْنَ

عَذَابًا مُّهِينًا ﴿١٥١﴾ وَالَّذِينَ اٰمَنُوا بِاللّٰهِ وَرُسُلِهٖ وَلَمْ يُفَرِّقُوا
بَيْنَ اَحَدٍ مِّنْهُمْ اُولٰٓئِكَ سَوْفَ يُؤْتِيْهِمْ اُجُوْرَهُمْ ؕ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ
غَفُوْرًا رَّحِيْمًا ﴿١٥٢﴾

Allah does not like the saying of evil words openly except from anyone wronged. And Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing. [148]

If you do good openly or keep it secret or overlook an evil deed, then, Allah is All-Forgiving, All-Powerful. [149]

Surely those who disbelieve in Allah and His Messengers, and wish to make division between Allah and His Messengers, and say, "We believe in some and disbelieve in some others" and wish to take a way in between that. [150] **Those are the disbelievers in reality, and We have prepared for the disbelievers a humiliating punishment.** [151]

And those who have believed in Allah and His Messengers, and have made no division between any of them, to them He will give their rewards. And Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful. [152]

Commentary

Out of these verses, the first (148) and the second (149) give a law to eradicate injustice and oppression from the world. But, this is not like the usual worldly laws which are limited to dictatory formulations. This, in turn, is the kind of law which tries a combination of persuasion and awe whereby, on the one hand, the victim of injustice has been permitted to protest against the perpetrator of injustice, or to go to a court of law to seek redress. All this is nothing but the basic demand of justice and, certainly, a source of eradication of crimes. But, along with this option, there is a restriction on it as mentioned in Sūrah al-Nahl: وَاِنْ عَاقَبْتُمْ فَعَاقِبُوْا بِمِثْلِ مَا عُوْقِبْتُمْ بِهٖ وَلَئِنْ صَبَرْتُمْ لَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لِّلصّٰبِرِيْنَ It means: 'If a person inflicts injustice on you, you too can retaliate against him for that injustice. But, the condition is that your retaliation should not exceed the unjust aggressive action by him - if so, it is you who would turn into the unjust one.' (16:126) The outcome is that returning an injustice by another injustice is not allowed. Rather, the retaliation to

injustice, if any, can be made only through justice. On the other hand alongwith this course of action, comes the instruction that revenge is, though permissible, yet observing patience (*ṣabr*) and forgiving is better.

This verse also tells us that for an oppressed person who goes about complaining to people about the injustice done to him or her, this will not be included under backbiting *ghībah*, which is *ḥarām* (forbidden) - because it is the oppressor who has given the victim the opportunity to complain. Thus, the Holy Qur'ān has, on the one hand, allowed the oppressed person to use the option of 'even retaliation' against the injustice. On the other hand, by teaching the oppressed to practice high morals and to forgive and forget, and by focusing before him the the great gain of the life-to-come, the victim of injustice has been persuaded to do a little sacrifice in this matter of his legitimate right and take no revenge for the injustice inflicted. The Holy Qur'ān says:

إِنْ تُبْدُوْا خَيْرًا اَوْ تُخْفُوْهُ اَوْ تَعْفُوْا عَنْ سُوْٓءٍ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ عَفُوًّا قَدِيْرًا

If you do good openly or keep it secret or overlook an evil deed, then, Allah is All-Forgiving, All-Powerful - 4:149

It means: If you do a good deed openly or do it secretly or forgive any injustice or evil done by someone, then, this is better, because Allah is All-Forgiving, All-Powerful. Primarily, this verse is concerned with the forgiving of injustice but, by also mentioning the doing of what is good, openly or secretly, the hint given is that this act of overlooking and forgiving is great and anyone who elects to do it shall become deserving of the mercy and forgiveness from Almighty Allah.

Towards the end of the verse, by saying فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ عَفُوًّا قَدِيْرًا (Allah is All-Forgiving, All-Powerful), it has been made clear that Allah is powerful in the absolute sense. He can punish whomsoever He wills, yet He is All-Forgiving. Now, a human being, who does not have much of power or choice, were to think of taking revenge, it is quite possible that he may just not have the capability to do that. Therefore, for such a person, overlooking and forgiving is far more desirable

This is the principle which the Holy Qur'ān enunciates to eradicate injustice and reform the society. The counsel, befitting of the Sustainer of everything, does, on the one hand permit retaliation in an equal

measure, thus upholding justice. On the other hand, it exhorts the aggrieved party to forgive and forgo. The result is what has been described in Qur'ān at another place:

فَإِذَا الَّذِي بَيْنَكَ وَبَيْنَهُ عَدَاوَةٌ كَأَنَّهُ وَلِيٌّ حَمِيمٌ

"You will see that he with whom you had enmity has become your closest friend" (41:34).

Court decisions and taking of revenge for injustices do play a role in checking injustice. The fact, however, is that the parties to the dispute are usually left saddled with long term grievances and feelings of abhorrence against each other which can result in further disputes in the future. The impeccable lesson in morality, given by Holy Qur'ān, results in patch up among quarrelling parties such that even old enmities change into close and lasting friendships.

Now, we move on to verses 150, 151 and 152 where the Holy Qur'ān has given the clear verdict that anyone who believes in Allah but does not believe in His messengers, or believes in some of them and does not believe in some others is not a believer in the sight of Allah. He is, rather, an open and avowed disbeliever for whom there is no road to salvation in the Hereafter. Let us examine this aspect of the verses concerned in some detail.

Salvation depends on Islam

This clear verdict of the Holy Qur'ān has exposed the rudderless and crooked ways of those who, in an effort to appear tolerant in dealings with peoples of other faiths, would like to present their religion and religious beliefs as gifts on a platter. By doing so, they wish to tell - despite and contrary to the clear injunctions of the Qur'ān and Sunnah - people of other faiths that Muslims do not think that salvation depends on Islam alone and a Jew could keep to his or her creed and a Christian to his or hers and yet, both could look forward to salvation; though, they deny all prophets or at least some of them, for which reason this verse has declared them to be the kind of disbelievers who are destined for Hell.

There is no doubt about the fact that Islam stands unmatched in its attitude to non-Muslims in matters of justice and fairness, sympathy and goodwill, favour and tolerance. But, good favours can be

made within the limits of one's rights and possessions. Religious principles and articles of faith are not our property which we could donate or present to somebody. Of course, Islam is generous and benevolent in its teachings of tolerance and good treatment with non-Muslims, but it is also equally cautious and firm in the defence of its frontiers. It maintains its essential approach of all possible sympathy and maximum tolerance with non-Muslims, but, at the same time, Islam absolves itself decisively from all forms of disbelief and customs woven around it, declaring Muslims as a people distinct from non-Muslims - and yet, it provides full protection to their national hallmarks. In short, Islam prefers to keep not only the acts of worship Muslims perform distinct from those of others, but also its way of life in a society, the examples of which abound in the Qur'ān and Sunnah.

Had Islam believed in the possibility of salvation through every religion or community, it would have had no right to lay so much stress on spreading the message (*Tablīgh*) of Islam, almost to the limit of staking property and life for it. This would have been wrong in principle and quite contrary to dictates of reason. In fact, by accepting such a premise, the very coming of the noble Prophet, may the blessings of Allah and peace be upon him, and the revelation of the glorious Qur'ān, is rendered, God forbid, redundant. And, lest we miss, the entire *Jihād* carried out by the noble Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and the rightly-guided Caliphs رضى الله عنهم اجمعين becomes meaningless, rather reduced to nothing but the lust for more land.

In this case, some people have fallen victims to doubt by a misreading of verse 62 in Sūrah al-Baqarah which is cited below:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ هَادُوا وَالنَّصٰرٰى وَالصّٰبِئِينَ مَنْ آمَنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ
وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ

Surely, those who believed in Allah, and those who happened to be Jews and Christians, and the Sabeans - whosoever believes in Allah and in the Last Day, and does good deeds - they have their reward with their Lord. And there is no fear for them nor shall they grieve.

Since, in this verse, rather than giving the full detail of what constitutes faith, only belief in Allah and in the Last Day has been considered sufficient, those who try to understand the Qur'ān through

an incomplete study have misunderstood the whole idea. They assumed that simply believing in Allah and the Last Day is enough for salvation and that believing in prophets is no condition for it. Thus, they failed to understand that the Qur'ān has its own terminology in which Belief in Allah, in order to be acceptable, has to be in conjunction with Belief in the Prophet. Otherwise, even the Satan admits that there is a God and that He is One. The Holy Qur'ān has itself clarified the real issue in the following words:

فَإِنْ آمَنُوا بِمِثْلِ مَا آمَنْتُمْ بِهِ فَقَدِ اهْتَدَوْا وَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَإِنَّمَا هُمْ فِي شِقَاقٍ فَسَيَكْفِيكَهُمُ اللَّهُ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ .

So, if they believe in the like of what you believe in, they have certainly found the right path. And if they turn away, they are nothing but in antagonism. Then Allah will suffice you against them, and He is the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing. (2:137)

In other words, we can say that their faith will be valid and trustworthy only when they have the same faith as common Muslims do, a faith in which Belief in the Prophet is indispensably necessary with Belief in Allah. Otherwise, if they do not do that, let it be understood that they are the ones who wish to create dissension. After that, for them, Allah will be sufficient on your behalf, and He is the One who hears everything and He is the One who knows everything.

As for the verses under discussion, it has been clearly declared that anyone who rejects even one of the prophets of Allah is an avowed disbeliever (*kāfir*) and a recipient of the punishment of Hell. So, let us remember that Belief in Allah, in order to be valid, has to be with Belief in the Prophet. If the Belief in the Prophet is not there, even referring to Belief in Allah as such will not be correct.

In the concluding verse (15:22), it has been reaffirmed that salvation in the Hereafter is the lot of those who believe in Him and in all of His prophets as well. Therefore, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said:

إِنَّ الْقُرْآنَ يُفَسِّرُ بَعْضُهُ بَعْضًا

One part of the Qur'an explains the other.

It is not permissible for anyone to explain the Qur'ān in any way

contrary to the *Tafsīr* of the Qur'ān itself.

Verses 153 - 154

يَسْئَلُكَ أَهْلُ الْكِتٰبِ أَنْ تُنَزِّلَ عَلَيْهِمْ كِتٰبًا مِّنَ السَّمَآءِ فَقَدْ
سَأَلُوْا مُوْسٰٓى أَكْبَرَ مِنْ ذٰلِكَ فَقَالُوْٓا أَرِنَا اللّٰهَ جَهْرَةً فَأَخَذَتْهُمُ
الصّٰعِقَةُ بِظُلْمِهِمْ ۚ ثُمَّ اتَّخَذُوا الْعِجْلَ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَآءَتْهُمُ
الْبَيِّنٰتُ فَعَفَوْنَا عَنْ ذٰلِكَ ۚ وَاٰتَيْنَا مُوْسٰى سُلْطٰنًا مُّبِيْنًا ﴿١٥٣﴾
وَرَفَعْنَا فَوْقَهُمُ الطُّوْرَ بِمِيْثَاقِهِمْ وَقُلْنَا لَهُمُ ادْخُلُوا الْبَابَ سُجَّدًا
وَّقُلْنَا لَهُمْ لَا تَعْدُوْا فِي السَّبْتِ وَأَخَذْنَا مِنْهُمْ مِّيْثَاقًا
غَلِيْظًا ﴿١٥٤﴾

The People of the Book ask you to bring down upon them a Book from the heaven. No wonder, (because) they have already asked Musa something greater than that when they said, "Make us see Allah openly." So, the thunderbolt took them for the wrong they did. Later, they took to themselves the calf even after the clear signs had come to them. Then, We forgave them, and gave Mūsā an open authority. [153] **And We raised the (Mount of) Ṭūr high over them for binding them to the pledge, and We said to them, "Do not transgress in (the matter of) the Sabbath." And We took from them a firm pledge.** [154]

Some previous verses censured Jews for their mistrustfulness in matters of faith. In the present verses too, there appears a long list of some of their other evil doings and, because of these ugly problems with them, mention has been made of their punishment. This strain continues in many more verses coming later.

Commentary

Some Jewish chiefs came to the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم and demanded that he bring down a book from the heaven similar to that which came to Mūsā علیہ السلام all written from there: If so, they would believe him. They had made this demand not because they wished to believe with all their heart on this condition. It was just a device to drag and stall. In fact, because of their chronic urge to take an oppo-

site stand, they were given to offering one or the other excuse all the time. By revealing this verse, Almighty Allah made the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم become aware of the real state of affairs. This was to give him comfort and peace of mind against the doings of a people who are used to harassing the prophets of Allah. They would go to unbelievable limits of audacity by going as far as committing outrage against Almighty Allah. Their forefathers had gone even beyond them by demanding something more grave: "Make us see Allah openly." Upon this audacity of theirs, came a thunderbolt from the heaven and destroyed them. Then, it was despite being fully cognizant of clear signs and proofs of Allah being One and free of any partners in His Divinity, they stooped lowest of the low by taking a calf as their object of worship bypassing their own genuine Creator. But, Allah still remained forbearing, otherwise the occasion demanded that they be eliminated. Then, Allah gave His prophet, Sayyidnā Mūsā, peace be upon him, authority and power. Then, there came an occasion when these people had flatly refused to acknowledge the canonical law of the Torah whereupon Allah raised the Mount of Ṭūr high suspending over them, thus threatening and forcing them to acknowledge the Law of Torah or otherwise they were to be mashed under the mountain. Allah had also told them to enter the gate of the city of Eliah humbly filled with fervour to obey Him. Allah had also asked them to catch fish on the day of Sabbath which was a command from Him and which was not to be transgressed. And Allah had taken a solemn pledge from them, but it so turned out that they contravened every single command one after the other breaking the solemn pledge with Allah. So, Allah too put disgrace on them in the mortal life of the world and they will have to undergo the worst punishment in the Hereafter as well.

Verses 155 - 159

فَبِمَا نَقْضِهِمْ مِّيْثَاقَهُمْ وَكُفْرِهِمْ بِاٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ وَقَتْلِهِمُ الْاَنْۢبِيَآءَ
بِغَيْرِ حَقٍّ وَّقَوْلِهِمْ قُلُوْبُنَا غُلْفٌ ؕ بَلْ طَبَعَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهَا بِكُفْرِهِمْ
فَلَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ اِلَّا قَلِيْلًا ﴿١٥٥﴾ وَّبِكُفْرِهِمْ وَقَوْلِهِمْ عَلٰى مَرْيَمَ
بُهْتَانًا عَظِيْمًا ﴿١٥٦﴾ وَّقَوْلِهِمْ اِنَّا قَتَلْنَا الْمَسِيْحَ عِيْسَى ابْنَ

مَرْيَمَ رَسُوْلَ اللّٰهِ ۚ وَمَا قَتَلُوْهُ وَمَا صَلَبُوْهُ وَلٰكِنْ شُبِّهَ لَهُمْ ۭ
وَاِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ اخْتَلَفُوْا فِيْهِ لَفِيْ شَكٍّ مِّنْهُ ۭ مَا لَهُمْ بِهٖ مِنْ عِلْمٍ اِلَّا
اتِّبَاعَ الظَّنِّ ۚ وَمَا قَتَلُوْهُ يَقِيْنًا ﴿١٥٧﴾ بَلْ رَّفَعَهُ اللّٰهُ اِلَيْهِ ۭ وَكَانَ
اللّٰهُ عَزِيْزًا حَكِيْمًا ﴿١٥٨﴾ وَاِنْ مِّنْ اَهْلِ الْكِتٰبِ اِلَّا لَيُؤْمِنَنَّ بِهٖ
قَبْلَ مَوْتِهٖ ۚ وَيَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ يَكُوْنُ عَلَيْهِمْ شَهِيْدًا ﴿١٥٩﴾

So, (they met their fate) for breaking their pledge, and for their disbelief in the verses of Allah, and for their slaying of the prophets unjustly, and for their saying, "Our hearts are sealed" - rather, Allah has set a seal over them for their disbelief. So, they do not believe but a little [155] **- and for their disbelief and for what they said against Maryam as a grim imputation,** [156] **and for their saying, "We have certainly killed the Masīḥ 'Īsā (Jesus) the son of Maryam, the Messenger of Allah." And they did not kill him, and they did not crucify him, but they were deluded by resemblance. And those who disputed in this matter are certainly in doubt about it. They have no knowledge of it, but they follow whims. And it is certain that they did not kill him,** [157] **but Allah lifted him towards Himself. And Allah is All-Mighty, All-Wise.** [158] **And there is not one among the People of the Book but shall certainly believe in him (Jesus) before he (Jesus) dies, and on the Day of Doom, he shall be a witness against them.** [159]

Like the earlier verses, the censure of Jews continues through the present ones. As a thematically coherent subject, their false ideas have also been refuted which have been discussed in detail in the following commentary.

Commentary

In the verse يٰعِيْسٰٓى اِنِّىْ مُتَوَفِّيْكَ وَرَافِعُكَ اِلَيَّ ("O 'Īsā, I am to take you in full and lift you towards Me... 3:55) appearing in Sūrah 'Al-'Imrān, Almighty Allah had made five promises in connection with foiling the Jewish plans against Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام and protecting him from their hostile intentions. A detailed explanation of these has been given earlier on that occasion in Sūrah 'Al-'Imrān. One of the promises made

there was that the Jews will not be allowed to have their way with their intention to kill Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام . Instead of that, Allah will lift him towards Him.

In the present verses (157-158) of Sūrah al-Nisā', it has been made explicit that they did not kill nor crucify Sayyidna 'Īsā عليه السلام , rather, what actually happened was that they were deluded by resemblance.

How were the Jews 'deluded by resemblance?'

While explaining the words of the Qur'ān: وَلٰكِنْ شُبِّهَ لَهُمْ (but they were deluded by resemblance), master exegete, Dahhak says: It so transpired that, following the intention of Jews to kill Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام his disciples assembled at a given place. Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام joined them there. It was Iblīs who gave the address of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام to the execution squad standing ready for the mission. Four thousand men surrounded the suspected house. Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام said to his disciples : 'Is one of you willing to go out and be killed and then be in Paradise with me?' One of them offered to do so. Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام gave him his shirt and head-cover. Then, cast on him was the resemblance of Jesus and as soon as he came out, the Jews, believing him to be Jesus, caught him and crucified him, and Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام was lifted. (Qurtubī)

According to some reports, the Jews had sent a person known to Arabs as Teetlanoos to kill Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام . He did not find Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام in the house for he was already lifted by Allah towards Himself. So, when this person came out of the house, he had been made to resemble the looks of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام . The Jews took him to be Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام . Thus, they took away their own man and killed him. (Mazharī)

There is room for whichever of the situations came to pass - the Holy Qur'ān has not determined any particular situation. Therefore, Allah alone knows what really happened. However, this sentence of the Holy Qur'ān seen with other exegetical reports does yield the common factor that the Jews and Christians were subjected to compelling delusion. The event as it took shape remained hidden from them, though they did advance all sorts of claims based on their conjectures which only landed them into mutual differences. This is what the Holy Qur'ān points out to in the following words:

وَإِنَّ الَّذِينَ اخْتَلَفُوا فِيهِ لَفِي شَكٍّ مِّنْهُ مَا لَهُم بِهِ مِنْ عِلْمٍ إِلَّا اتِّبَاعَ الظَّنِّ وَمَا قَتَلُوهُ يَقِينًا

And those who disputed in this matter are certainly in doubt about it. They have no knowledge of it, but they follow whims.

It means that they do not have certitude based on any true knowledge. The diverse claims put forward by those who have differed in the case of Masīḥ عليه السلام are simply based on doubt and conjecture. The truth of the matter is that they certainly did not kill Masīḥ عليه السلام, rather Allah lifted him towards Himself.

According to some other reports, when some of them woke up to what had happened, they said, 'We seem to have killed our own man, for the man we have put to death resembles Masīḥ عليه السلام in face only but not in the rest of the body. Now, if this man we have killed is Masīḥ عليه السلام where, then, is our man? And if this is our man where, then, is Masīḥ عليه السلام ?'

Verse 158, part of which was referred to immediately earlier, ends at: وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَزِيزًا حَكِيمًا : (And Allah is All-Mighty, All-Wise) carrying a significant message. It means that the planning of Jews to kill Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام was insignificant as matched against the Power of Allah who has taken it upon Himself to protect Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام. Might and mastery are His domain. If materialists in their single-track isolation, remain incapable of understanding the reality of the 'lifting off' of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام, that is their own limitation. As for Allah, He is All-Wise - everything He does is based on wisdom and fitness to whatever end is desired.

Then comes the finale of the subject in verse 159 beginning with the words: وَإِن مِّنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ إِلَّا لَيُؤْمِنَنَّ بِهِ قَبْلَ مَوْتِهِ (And there is not one among the People of the Book but shall certainly believe in him {Jesus} before he {Jesus} dies, and on the Day of Doom, he shall be a witness against them). It means: Though, at this time, so blinded by malice and envy are these people that they are unable to see reality as it is, hold false ideas about Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام and, in addition to that, they are denying the prophethood of Sayyidnā Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā ﷺ yet, a time is to come when their eyes will open up and they will realize that all their notions about Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام and Sayyidnā

Muḥammad ﷺ were totally false.

One explanation of this verse (159), which appears in Bayān al-Qur'ān by Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thānavī, is that the pronoun in the Qur'ānic word مَوْتِهِ (*mawtihi*: his death) be attributed to the People of the Book. The verse, in that sense, would mean that those Jews, when they see a glimpse of *Barzakh* (the state between death and resurrection) moments before their death, they will readily believe in the prophethood of Sayyidnā 'Īsā علیہ السلام though, their believing at that point of time will be of no use to them, very much useless like the believing of Pharaoh which he did while drowning.

The second *tafsīr* (explanation) which has been adopted by a large number of *Ṣaḥābah* and *Tābi'īn* (the Companions and their Successors) and which also has the support of authentic *Ḥadīth* maintains that the pronoun in the word '*mawtihī*' refers back to Sayyidnā Masīḥ علیہ السلام and, in that light, the verse means that the People of the Book of this time, be they Jews or Christians, do not believe in Sayyidnā 'Īsā علیہ السلام in the real sense. The Jews just do not accept him as a prophet, rather, they accuse him of being, God forbid, a liar and imposter! As for the Christians, some of them despite claiming to believe in him, reached a level of ignorance which, like the Jews, led them to accept that Sayyidnā 'Īsā علیہ السلام was crucified and killed. Then, there were others among them who, in their excess of belief, went out of the limits when they took him to be God and Son of God - but, says the verse of the Qur'ān, though they do not believe in the prophethood of Sayyidnā 'Īsā علیہ السلام at this time as they should; but the time will come, close to the Day of Doom, when he will reappear on this earth and all Peoples of the Book will believe in him genuinely and authentically. All Christians will become Muslims holding true beliefs. The hostile among the Jews will be killed, the rest will become Muslims. That will be the time when *Kufr* will be banished from the world along with whatever forms it may have. Islam will finally reign supreme on the earth.

Reproduced below is a report from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضی اللہ عنہ:

عن ابی هريرة عن النبی صلی الله عليه وسلم أنه قال: لينزلن ابن مريم
حكما عدلا فليقتلن الدجال، وليقتلن الخنزير، وليكسرن الصليب وتكون

السجدة واحدة لله رب العلمين. ثم قال ابو هريرة : واقرؤا ان شئتم "وَاِنْ مِّنْ اَهْلِ الْكِتٰبِ اِلَّا لَيُؤْمِنَنَّ بِهٖ قَبْلَ مَوْتِهٖ" قال ابو هريرة: "قبل موت عيسى" يعيدها ثلث مرات .

"The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: The son of Maryam shall definitely reappear as a just ruler. He will kill the Anti-Christ and the swine. He will break the Cross and worship shall be made for Allah alone, the one Lord of all the worlds. Then, Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah said: Read, if you wish, the verse of the Qur'an - وَاِنْ مِّنْ اَهْلِ الْكِتٰبِ اِلَّا لَيُؤْمِنَنَّ بِهٖ قَبْلَ مَوْتِهٖ (159) which mentions that not one person from out of the People of the Book will remain without having believed in Sayyidnā 'Īsā before his death. Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah, then, said with stress: 'Before the death of 'Īsā عليه السلام' and he repeated it three times. (Qurṭubī)

This *Tafsīr* (explanation) of the verse under reference stands proved from a highly venerated Companion such as Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضى الله عنه on the added strength of sound chain of narrators. This report establishes that the Qur'ānic words: قَبْلَ مَوْتِهٖ (before his death) mean 'before the death of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام and which explicitly determines that this verse is related to the coming of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام close to the *Qiyāmah* (Doomsday).

As based on this *tafsīr*, this verse is a conclusive evidence that the death of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام has not yet come to pass. In fact, when he is sent down from the heaven close to *Qiyāmah* and the wise considerations of Almighty Allah working behind his coming reach their ultimate fruition, it will be only then that his death will occur on this very earth.

This is also supported by the following verse of Sūrah al-Zukhruf (43:61): وَاِنَّهٗ لَعِلْمٌ لِّلسَّاعَةِ فَلَا تَمْتَرُنَّ بِهَا وَاتَّبِعُوْنِ (that is, Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام is a sign of the Doomsday. So, do not doubt it and listen to what I say.) A larger number of commentators has said that the pronoun in the Qur'ānic word اِنَّهٗ at this point refers back to Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام and it means that Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام is a sign of *Qiyāmah* (Doomsday). From here we learn that this verse reports the coming of the Masīḥ عليه السلام, that is, he will appear close to the *Qiyāmah* and his appearance will be one of the signs of it.

Also worth attention is yet another reading of the Qur'ānic word لَعِلْمٌ (*la'ilmun*) in this verse (43:61) which is: لَعَلَمٌ (*la'alamun*). According to this reading the meaning becomes all the more clear because the word عَلَمٌ (*'alam*) with the *fatha* of *lām* means 'sign or symbol.' The following *tafsir* of Sayyidnā 'Abdullah ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ lends added support to this view: عن ابن عباس رضى الله عنه فى قوله تعالى: "وَإِنَّهُ لَعِلْمٌ لِّلسَّاعَةِ" قال: خروج عيسى عليه السلام قَبْلَ يَوْمِ الْقِيٰمَةِ (About the verse: وَإِنَّهُ لَعِلْمٌ لِّلسَّاعَةِ - 43:61 - Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbas reported that it refers to Sayyidnā 'Īsā علیہ السلام who will come before the *Qiyāmah* (Ibn Kathīr)

In short, if we combine the statement: '*Qabla mawtihī*' (Before his death - 4:159) with the authentic ḥadīth of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah and its explanation, the truth that Sayyidnā 'Īsā علیہ السلام is alive and that he will reappear close to the Doomsday and overcome the Jews stands proved conclusively. Similarly, this view also becomes certain through the words: وَإِنَّهُ لَعِلْمٌ لِّلسَّاعَةِ : 'Surely, he (Sayyidnā 'Īsā) is a sign of the Doomsday,' as explained by Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ .

The master commentator, Ibn Kathīr, while explaining the verse: وَإِنَّهُ لَعِلْمٌ لِّلسَّاعَةِ cited above, has said:

وقد تواترت الاحاديث عن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم انه اخبر بنزول عيسى عليه السلام قبل يوم القيمة اماما عادلا (ابن كثير)

"The sayings of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in this connection have been reported through *tawātur* (in an uninterrupted succession) that he has conveyed the tidings of the coming of 'Īsā علیہ السلام in this world before the Day of Doom as a just ruler. (Ibn Kathīr)

These narrations appearing in an uninterrupted succession (*mutawātir*) were collected by my teacher and a great servant of Islam, Maulānā Muḥammad Anwar Shāh al-Kashmirī. These were more than a hundred in number. This humble writer compiled this collection in Arabic and it was published way back under the title: التصريح بما تواتر فى نزول المسيح as proposed by my respected teacher. Recently, a major Syrian scholar, Al-'Allāmah 'Abd al-Fattāḥ Abū Ghuddah has published from the city of Beirut a deluxe edition of this work with additional explanations and notes.

The belief in the coming of 'Īsā عليه السلام towards the later times is absolute and unanimous as held by the Muslims and the denier of which goes out of the pale of Islam

This subject has become clear enough from the discussion of verses in this part of the commentary. A more comprehensive treatment of the subject has already appeared in the commentary on Sūrah 'Al-'Imrān which may be consulted. The discussions there also include answers to doubts raised by some so-called modernists of our time in order to hurt the credibility of this article of Muslim faith. Only Allah can guide whomsoever He wills.

Verses 160 - 161

فَبِظُلْمٍ مِّنَ الَّذِيْنَ هَادُوْا حَرَّمْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ طَيِّبٰتٍ اُحِلَّتْ لَهُمْ وَبِصَدِّهِمْ عَنْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ كَثِيْرًا ﴿١٦٠﴾ وَّاَخْذِهِمُ الرِّبٰوا وَقَدْ نُهُوْا عَنْهُ وَاَكْلِهِمْ اَمْوَالَ النَّاسِ بِالْبَاطِلِ ۭ وَاَعْتَدْنَا لِلْكٰفِرِيْنَ مِنْهُمْ عَذَابًا اَلِيْمًا ﴿١٦١﴾

So, for the transgression of those who became Jews, We prohibited for them good things which were made lawful for them earlier and for their preventing (people) frequently from the way of Allah, [160] **and for their taking *riba* (usury or interest) while they were forbidden from it, and for their eating up of the properties of the people by false means. And We have prepared, for the disbelievers among them, a painful punishment.** [161]

Mentioned earlier through several verses were the wrongdoings of Jews and the punishment they would get for doing so. The present verses talk about some other vices of theirs and mention yet another kind of punishment as well. This punishment will, obviously, visit them on the Day of Judgment. But, right here in this present world, the outcome will be that they will find many things already lawful for them made unlawful as a measure of punishment.

Commentary

In the Sharī'ah brought by the Holy Prophet Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā صلى الله عليه وسلم there are some things too, known as *ḥaram* or

unlawful, but these were forbidden because of one or the other physical or spiritual harm they bring. This was contrary to what happened with the Jews - the good things forbidden to them had no physical or spiritual harm in them, instead, these were forbidden to them as the punishment of their acts of transgression and disobedience.

Verse 162

لٰكِنِ الرّٰسِخُوْنَ فِى الْعِلْمِ مِنْهُمْ وَالْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِمَآ اُنْزِلَ اِلَيْكَ وَمَآ اُنْزِلَ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ وَالْمُقِيْمِيْنَ الصَّلٰوةَ وَالْمُؤْتُوْنَ الزَّكٰوةَ وَالْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ سَنُؤْتِيْهِمْ اَجْرًا عَظِيْمًا ﴿١٦٢﴾

But those well-grounded in knowledge among them and the believers, believe in what has been revealed to you and what has been revealed before you, and, of course, those observing the Ṣalāh and paying the Zakāh and those believing in Allaḥ and the Last Day. To them we shall give a great reward. [162]

The previous verses referred to Jews who adhered to their disbelief and obstinately continued practising what was blame-worthy. The present verse now cites those who were, no doubt, from among the People of the Book, but, when the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم came with his mission and they found in him, fully and unmistakably, all qualities the Last among Prophets عليهم السلام was supposed to have according to the prophesies of their Scriptures, they believed in him - like Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Salām, Usayd and Tha'labah, may Allah be pleased with them all. The words of praise in this verse are for these blessed souls.

Commentary

The great reward promised to those referred to here is because of their qualities of faith and righteous deeds. As far as salvation as such is concerned that depends on the correction of essentials of doctrinal matters - of course, subject to the condition, that one's life ends with the blessing of faith (*'Īmān*).

Verses 163 - 169

إِنَّآ أَوْحَيْنَآ إِلَيْكَ كَمَآ أَوْحَيْنَآ إِلَىٰ نُوحٍ وَّالنَّبِيِّـۧنَ مِنۢ بَعْدِهِۦ ۚ
وَأَوْحَيْنَآ إِلَىٰٓ إِبْرَٰهِيمَ وَإِسْمَـٰعِيلَ وَإِسْحَـٰقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ وَالْأَسْبَاطِ
وَعِيسَىٰ وَأَيُّوبَ وَيُونُسَ وَهَـٰرُونَ وَسُلَيْمَـٰنَ ۚ وَءَاتَيْنَا دَاوُۥدَ
زَبُورًا ﴿١٦٣﴾ وَرُسُلًا قَدْ قَصَصْنَـٰهُمْ عَلَيْكَ مِن قَبْلُ وَرُسُلًا لَّمْ
نَقْصُصْهُمْ عَلَيْكَ ۚ وَكَلَّمَ اللَّهُ مُوسَىٰ تَكْلِيمًا ﴿١٦٤﴾ رُّسُلًا
مُّبَشِّرِينَ وَمُنذِرِينَ لِئَلَّا يَكُونَ لِلنَّاسِ عَلَى اللَّهِ حُجَّةٌۢ بَعْدَ
الرُّسُلِ ۚ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَزِيزًا حَكِيمًا ﴿١٦٥﴾ لَّـٰكِنِ اللَّهُ يَشْهَدُ بِمَآ
أَنزَلَ إِلَيْكَ ۖ أَنزَلَهُۥ بِعِلْمِهِۦ ۖ وَالْمَلَـٰٓئِكَةُ يَشْهَدُونَ ۚ وَكَفَىٰ بِاللَّهِ
شَهِيدًا ﴿١٦٦﴾ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَصَدُّوا عَن سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ قَدْ
ضَلُّوا ضَلَـٰلًۢا بَعِيدًا ﴿١٦٧﴾ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَظَلَمُوا لَمْ يَكُنِ
اللَّهُ لِيَغْفِرَ لَهُمْ وَلَا لِيَهْدِيَهُمْ طَرِيقًا ﴿١٦٨﴾ إِلَّا طَرِيقَ جَهَنَّمَ
خَـٰلِدِينَ فِيهَآ أَبَدًا ۚ وَكَانَ ذَٰلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ يَسِيرًا ﴿١٦٩﴾

Surely, We have revealed to you as We have revealed to Nūḥ (Noah) and to the prophets after him; and We have revealed to Ibrāhīm, Ismā'īl, Isḥāq, Ya'qūb and their children, and to 'Īsā, Ayyūb, Yūnus, Ḥārūn and Sulaymān. And We have given Zabūr to Dāwūd. [1] [163]

And, (We have sent down) some Messengers We have already told you about, and some other Messengers We did not tell you about and Allah has spoken to Mūsā verbally [164] **- Messengers giving good tidings and warning so that people may have no plea against Allah**

1. These are the names of the prophets Biblically spelt respectively as follows:

Abraham, Ishmael, Issac, Israel, Jesus, Job, Jonah, Aaron, Solomon and David.

Zabur is the name of the Book revealed to David, Biblically known as the Psalms.

after the Messengers (have come). And Allah is All-Mighty, All-Wise. [165]

But Allah bears witness (to your prophethood) through what He has revealed to you, (and) revealed it with His knowledge. And the angels too, bear witness. And Allah is sufficient as witness. [166]

Surely, those who disbelieved and prevented (people) from the way of Allah have gone far astray. [167] **Surely, those who disbelieved and transgressed, Allah is not going to forgive them nor lead them to a way** [168] **- other than the way of *Jahannam* where they are to remain for ever. And that, for Allah, is easy.** [169]

If we refer back to Verse 153: يَسْـَٔلُكَ أَهْلُ الْكِتٰبِ (The People of the Book ask you ...), it will be noticed that a silly question asked by the Jews was responded to in the mode of reproach. Here, in the present verse, the same question is being proved false in a different manner. It takes up their condition which they place before the Holy Prophet ﷺ , that is, they would believe in him if he brings before them a Book, all written up, from the heavens. They are being asked to realize that they do not make such demands before believing in the great prophets mentioned in the verse, prophets they too accept. Keeping this in view, it is necessary that they keep to the line of argument they use in favour of these great prophets, that is, they accept them on the basis of their miracles. As for miracles, Sayyidnā Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وسلم has his miracles as well, therefore, there is no reason why they cannot step forward and believe in him too. But, the truth of the matter is that the demand they are making is no quest for truth. On the contrary, it is rooted in prejudice and hostility.

Then comes a delineation of the wisdom behind the sending of prophets and an address to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم assuring him that Allah and His angels are witnesses to his prophethood and those who do not believe in him do nothing but ruin their own end. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

Commentary

Verse 163 begins with the words: إِنَّآ أَوْحَيْنَآ إِلَيْكَ كَمَآ أَوْحَيْنَآ إِلٰى نُوْحٍ وَّالنَّبِيّٖنَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِهٖ : 'Surely, We have revealed to you as We have revealed to Nūḥ (Noah)

and to the prophets after him ...' It tells us clearly that *Waḥy* (revelation) is a command of Allah, unique and unimitable, and His message sent to prophets; and that Almighty Allah sent His *Waḥy* to Sayyidnā Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā صلى الله عليه وسلم just as it was sent to the past prophets; and that whoever believed in the *Waḥy* sent to past prophets must believe in this too; and that whoever rejects this becomes so to say, a rejecter of all those revelations.

The reason for striking a similarity between Sayyidnā Nūḥ and those who came after him is probably that the *Waḥy* at the time of Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام was at an initial stage which reached its perfection with the prophethood of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام . It can be said that the first state was an state of educational initiation while by the time of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام that state reached a stage of development under which people could be tested with the incentive of reward for the obedient and the warning of punishment for the disobedient. Thus, it was from Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام himself that the chain of great prophets began and it was from his time too that the first punishment descended on those who transgressed against Divine revelation.

In short, punishment would not descend upon people for their hostility against Divine commandments and prophetic teachings. They were considered rather excusable and allowed to learn in due time through good counsel. Once religious education became fully widespread and people were left with no hidden reason to avoid following the dictates of Divine will, punishment did descend upon the disobedient ones. The Great Flood came during the time of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام followed by different kinds of punishment visiting disbelievers during the times of prophets Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ, Sayyidnā Shu'ayb and many others, may peace be on them all. Thus, by likening the *Waḥy* which came to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم with the *Waḥy* of Sayyidnā Nūḥ and of those who came after him, full waring has been served on the People of the Book and on the disbelievers of Makkah that anyone who will not believe in the *Waḥy* (that is, The Qur'ān) of the Last of the Prophets will deserve the greatest punishment. (Exegetical notes of Maulānā Shabbīr Aḥmad 'Usmānī)

Before we move to the next verse, it would be useful to keep in

mind that the personal presence of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام, whose name appears first in this verse, was a miracle by itself. He was blessed with an age of nine hundred and fifty years. He had lost none of his teeth and had no streaks of white hair on his head and had faced no deficiency in his physical strength - yet, he spent his whole life time braving the pain inflicted by his people on him with matching patience and fortitude. (Maẓharī)

In verse 164 which opens with the words: وَرُسُلًا قَدْ قَصَصْنٰهُمْ عَلَيْكَ 'And, (We have sent down) some Messengers We have already told you about ...', after a brief mention of prophets who appeared after Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام, a special citation has been made of the greatest prophets from among them. The purpose is to tell us that they are all prophets and Waḥy comes to prophets via different modes. It could be an angel with a message. It could also be a written Book. Sometimes Almighty Allah talks directly to His Messenger. In short, when Wahy comes, no matter in what mode or manner it does, acting in accordance with it becomes obligatory. Therefore, the saying of Jews that they would believe only if there comes to them a written Book like the Torah, otherwise they would not, is to say the least, being short on sense and tall on disbelief.

As reported by Sayyidnā Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī رضی الله عنه, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: 'Almighty Allah has sent one hundred and twenty four thousand prophets out of which three hundred and thirteen were Sharī'ah-bearing Messengers of Allah.' (Qurṭubī)

Then comes verse 165: رُسُلًا مُّبَشِّرِيْنَ وَمُنْذِرِيْنَ (-- Messengers giving good tidings and warning...) which succinctly tells that Almighty Allah consistently sent messengers to convey good tidings to all believers and to warn all disbelievers so that there remains no room for the excuse that they did not know the will of God and His Messengers -- had they known about it, they would have certainly followed it! Now, that Almighty Allah has sent messengers with miracles and His messengers have shown the straight path of truth, the option of not accepting the true faith cannot be accepted from anyone under any pretext or excuse. Such is the nature of Divine Revelation. Waḥy is an absolute argument, final, conclusive and disarming. No argument stands operative against it. In fact, all arguments lie surrendered

under its weight. And this is the wisdom of Allah and His *modus operandi.*

It has been narrated by Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ that a group of Jews came to the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم . He said to them: Surely, you do know that I am a true messenger of Allāh? They refused to accept that whereupon came the following verse (166): لٰكِنِ اللّٰهُ يَشْهَدُ بِمَآ اَنْزَلَ اِلَيْكَ 'But Allah bears witness (to your prophethood) through what He has revealed to you ...' The verse addressed to the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم declares that Allah is a witness to his prophethood through the miraculous Qur'ān, a perfect message from out of His Knowledge. The Book has been revealed to him with full realization that he is deserving of it, and the angels too join in the testimony. After the very witnessing of the All-Knowing, All-Aware Allah, there is nothing left to argue about.

The text, after having confirmed the veracity of the glorious Qur'ān and the noble Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم , turns to those who still deny them, conceal his character traits and circumstantial indicators of his appearance present in the Torah and, sordidly enough, try to keep others away from the true faith by bringing out before them things which are not there or things which have been jumbled together to distort the truth. For such people, there shall be no forgiveness and no guidance either. Thus, it becomes very clear that guidance or the ability to find the straight path depends on following the Holy Prophet ﷺ and straying away, whatever be its nature, is nothing but hostility towards him. This, then, comprehensively refutes all erroneous ideas of the Jews.

Verse 170

يٰٓاَيُّهَا النَّاسُ قَدْ جَآءَكُمُ الرَّسُوْلُ بِالْحَقِّ مِنْ رَّبِّكُمْ فَاٰمِنُوْا خَيْرًا لَّكُمْ ۭ وَاِنْ تَكْفُرُوْا فَاِنَّ لِلّٰهِ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ۭ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ عَلِيْمًا حَكِيْمًا ﴿۱۷۰﴾

O men, the Messenger has come to you with the truth from your Lord. So, believe. That is good for you. And if you disbelieve, then, to Allah belongs what is in the heavens and the earth. And Allah is All-Knowing, All-

Wise. [170]

After answering the objections raised by the Jews and confirming the prophethood of Sayyidnā Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā, صلى الله عليه وسلم, the Qur'ān carries the message of Allah to all human beings wherever they may be as they are its direct addressees in this verse. The essence of the message is: Your salvation lies nowhere but in your belief in the prophethood of Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وسلم so, believe and prosper.

As for those who choose to disbelieve, they lose everything while Allah loses nothing. With His limitless domain and power, who can conceive of bringing any loss or harm to Him? This is something the disbelievers should worry about. Let them be certain that Allah knows everything about their believing and disbelieving and let not the delay or decrease in punishment in this world put them on the wrong foot for He is All-Wise too and does what His wisdom allows to prevail.

Verse 171

يٰٓاَهْلَ الْكِتٰبِ لَا تَغْلُوْا فِيْ دِيْنِكُمْ وَلَا تَقُوْلُوْا عَلَى اللّٰهِ اِلَّا
الْحَقَّ ؕ اِنَّمَا الْمَسِيْحُ عِيْسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ رَسُوْلُ اللّٰهِ وَكَلِمَتُهٗ ۚ
اَلْقٰهَآ اِلٰى مَرْيَمَ وَرُوْحٌ مِّنْهُ ز فَاٰمِنُوْا بِاللّٰهِ وَرُسُلِهٖ ۚ وَلَا تَقُوْلُوْا
ثَلٰثَةٌ ؕ اِنْتَهُوْا خَيْرًا لَّكُمْ ؕ اِنَّمَا اللّٰهُ اِلٰهٌ وَّاحِدٌ ؕ سُبْحٰنَهٗٓ اَنْ يَّكُوْنَ
لَهٗ وَلَدٌ ۘ لَهٗ مَا فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِى الْاَرْضِ ؕ وَكَفٰى بِاللّٰهِ
وَكِيْلًا ﴿۱۷۱﴾

O people of the Book, be not excessive in your Faith and do not say about Allah anything but the truth. The Masīḥ 'Īsā, the son of Maryam, is only a Messenger of Allah and His word He delivered to Maryam, and a spirit from Him. So, believe in Allah and His Messengers. And do not say "Three". Stop it. That is good for you. Allah is the only One God. He is far too pure to have a son. To Him belongs what is in the heavens and what is in the earth. And Allah is enough to trust in. [171]

Jews were the addressees in previous verses which provided details of how astray they had gone. The present verses address the

Christians and refute their doctrinal position as related to God and Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام .

Commentary

The word: كَلِمَتُهُ : *Kalimatuh* used in this verse tells us that Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام is the 'word' of Allah. Commentators have given different meanings of this expression:

1. Imām al-Ghazzālī has said that two factors operate in the birth of a child: One is the sperm, the other is the saying of the word كُنْ or 'be' by Almighty Allah after which the child comes to exist. Since the first factor is out of question in the case of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام , therefore, it was by attribution to the second factor that he was called كَلِمَةُ اللهِ (the word of Allah). It means that he came into existence solely through the word: كُنْ (be) without the mediacy of material means. In this case, the statement which follows immediately, that is, اَلْقٰهَآ اِلٰى مَرْيَمَ would mean that Almighty Allah delivered this word to Maryam عليها السلام as a result of which the birth of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام came to be.

2. Some have said that the expression: كَلِمَةُ اللهِ (the word of Allah) has been used in the sense of: بشارة الله (the glad tiding of Allah) and it refers to Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام . It will be recalled that the glad tiding of the coming of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام given to Maryam عليها السلام by Almighty Allah through the angels carries the expression: *Kalimah* or word: اِذْ قَالَتِ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ يٰمَرْيَمُ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يُبَشِّرُكِ بِكَلِمَةٍ (When the angels said, "O Maryam, Allah gives you the good news of a word ... 3:45).

3. Some have said that *kalimah* (word) has been used here in the sense of '*āyah* or sign, as it has appeared elsewhere in the same sense: وَصَدَّقَتْ بِكَلِمٰتِ رَبِّهَا 'She (Maryam) testified to the word of her Lord as true.' (66:12)

Let us now consider the statement: وَرُوْحٌ مِّنْهُ (... and a spirit from Him.) in this verse. Worth attention here are two aspects of our probe. Firstly, why has Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام been referred to as *rūḥ* or spirit? Secondly, since by saying 'from Him' the spirit has been attributed to Almighty Allah, what, then, would be the sense of such an attribution?

In this connection, several exegetical stances of commentators have been reported. Their gist is being given below:

1. Some of them explain it on the basis of lexical usage. They say

that, according to the rule of *'urf* or recognized customary practice, the word *'rūḥ'* or 'spirit' is used in the sense of 'essence' to enhance the effect of pristine purity in something. Since the birth of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام was totally unrelated to the mediation of any father and he was the outcome of nothing but the will of Allah, in His supreme majesty, and a result of the word: كُن (*kun*: be), therefore, he was blessed with the most perfect degree of purity. This is the reason why he was called 'a spirit' or 'essence' as admitted by recognized practice. As for the attribution to Allah, it is there to hold him in esteem. This is like attributing *Masajid* (mosques) to Allah in order to enhance the respect in which they are held. Hence, the expression: *Masājidullāh* or the Mosques of Allah. Or, the Ḥoly Ka'bah, by attributing it to Allah, is called: *Baytullāh* or the House of Allah. Or, by attributing someone religiously observing and worshipfully obedient to Allah, he is called: 'Abd Allah' or the servant or slave of Allah. Thus, it is in accord with this formulation that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been referred to in Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl in the wordings: أَسْرٰى بِعَبْدِهٖ (carried His servant) (17:1) where the attribution to Allah reflects honour given to him.

2. Some commentators have said that the purpose behind the coming of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام was that he should infuse spiritual life into the dead hearts of people and make them alive once again (familiar as born-again Christians in the West). Since he was the cause of spiritual life very much like the spirit is the cause of physical life, therefore, it was in this light that he was called a spirit. In fact, this word has been used for the Holy Qur'ān as well: وَكَذٰلِكَ أَوْحَيْنَآ إِلَيْكَ رُوْحًا مِّنْ أَمْرِنَا (and thus We have revealed to you a spirit of Our Command - 42:52) because the Holy Qur'ān too blesses people with spiritual life.

3. Some others have said that *rūḥ* (spirit) is also used in the sense of secret. Since Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام was, because of his unusual birth, a sign and secret of Allah, therefore, he was called: *Rūḥullāh* (the spirit of Allah).

4. Some say that the adjunct is understood here since the statement was to be read as: ذُوْ رُوْحٍ مِّنْهُ (the possessor of a spirit from Him). However, since all rational beings are equal as the possessors of a spirit, the distinction of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام was made manifest when Almighty Allah turned his attribution towards Himself.

5. According to yet another exegetical view, the word: *Rūḥ* has been used in the sense of *nafkh* or the blowing of breath. Sayyidnā Jibra'īl عليه السلام had, as commanded by Allah, blown his breath on the collar of Sayyidah Maryam عليها السلام and that became the conception. Since only a blow of breath had caused the birth of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام as a miracle, therefore, he was called: *Rūḥullāh* or the spirit of Allah. Another verse of the Holy Qur'ān: نَفَخْنَا فِيْهَا مِنْ رُّوْحِنَا (then, We blew Our spirit in her - 21:91) points out in this direction.

In addition to these, several other probabilities have also been suggested. However, none of these come to mean that Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام is a part of Allah or a divine person on the basis of which it could be suggested that this very spirit we are talking about has manifested itself in the human form of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام.

A telling repartee

'Allāmah Al-Ālūsī, the author of the famous *Tafsīr* Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī has reported an episode from the court of Caliph Ḥarūn al-Rashīd where a Christian physician entered into a debate against the scholar 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Wāqidī challenging him that his Book (the Qur'ān) has a particular word which indicates that Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام is a part of Allah. And as a proof, he read out the verse (171) which carries the words: رُوْحٌ مِّنْهُ (a spirit from Him). 'Allāmah al-Wāqidī came up with a rejoinder and recited another verse (45:13) of the Qur'ān: وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمْ مَّا فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِى الْأَرْضِ جَمِيْعًا مِّنْهُ (The meaning of the verse is that everything that there is in the heavens and the earth is *from the same Allah* where the word - *minhu*: from Him - serves to attribute everything to Allah) and said: 'If رُوْحٌ مِّنْهُ (*rūḥim-minhu*: a spirit from Him) means, as you think, that Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام is a part of Allah, then, the verse I have just recited would mean that every thing in the heavens and the earth is also a part of Allah?' Thus, silenced, the Christian physician chose to become a Muslim.

The Qur'ān and the doctrine of Trinity

Reflected in the statement of the Qur'ān: وَلَا تَقُوْلُوْا ثَلٰثَةٌ (And do not say "Three") is the state of the major sects among Christians in which they were divided at the time of the revelation of the Qur'ān. The doctrine of Trinity they adhered to was based on three separate principles. One sect maintained that Masīḥ is God and it is God Himself

who has appeared in the world in the form of Masīḥ. The second sect believed that Masīḥ is the son of God while the third sect claimed unity in trinity - the father, the son and Mary. Even this group was split in two. The second group said that the Holy Spirit (*Rūḥul-Quds*) and not Sayyidah Maryam (Mary) was the third person (hypostasis). So, these people acknowledged Sayyidnā Masīḥ عليه السلام as the third of the three. Therefore, all the three sects have been addressed, separately and jointly in the Holy Qur'ān whereby the Christians have been clearly told that there is just one truth and that truth is that Masīḥ عليه السلام is a human being born to Maryam عليها السلام, and a true Messenger of God. Whatever is said beyond that is all false and ineffectual - whether it be loaded with the excess of under-estimation, as believed by the Jews, viz., God forbid, he was an imposter and fabricator: or, be a case of the excess of over-estimation as believed by the Christians, viz., God forbid, he is God or the son of God or the third of the three.

In many of its verses, the Holy Qur'ān has, on the one hand, pointed out to the strayings of the Christians and Jews while, on the other, it has focused brightly on the exalted station of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام in the sight of Almighty Allah so that the true path of moderation could emerge clearly from out of the mazes of excess and deficiency.

Those interested in detailed information about various aspects of Christian beliefs vis-a-vis the veracity of Islam may wish to study the world-famous book, Iẓhārul-Ḥaqq by Maulānā Raḥmatullāh Kīrānawī. This original work in Arabic has been translated and published by Dārul-Uloom, Karachi, Pakistan in three volumes with detailed annotations.[1]

Towards the end of the verse, it was declared: لَهٗ مَا فِی السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِی الْاَرْضِ وَكَفٰى بِاللّٰهِ وَكِيْلًا (To him belongs what is in the heavens and what is in the earth. And Allah is enough to trust in.). The drive of the meaning is: When everything has been created by Him, when everything falls under the domain of His mastery and when everyone is a servant of

1. An English translation of this work has been recently completed by Maulānā Muḥammd Wali Raazi, son of Ḥaḍrat Mufti Muḥammad Shafī رحمة الله عليه and is presently under the process of publication under the auspices of the translator himself.

Allah, who and how could anyone become His partner or associate or son? The fact is that Almighty Allah is the dispenser of all our needs and the sole caretaker of everyone's wants - He is universally and perennially sufficient, all by Himself. He needs nobody. How, then, could He need to have a partner or son?

To sum up, we can say that no created being has the ability or qualification to become His partner, nor does His most sacred Being have the room or need for it. This much is enough to tell us that suggesting a partner to God or ascribing a son to Him can be accomplished by none but the one who is deprived of faith and reason both.

Excess in Faith

Let us now go back to the opening statement of the verse: لَا تَغْلُوْا فِیْ دِیْنِكُمْ. In this verse, the People of the Book have been asked not to indulge in excess in matters relating to their Faith. Lexically, the Qur'ānic word: الغلو : *al-Ghuluww* means to cross the limits or transgress. In Aḥkām al-Qur'ān, Imām al-Jaṣṣāṣ says:

الغلو فی الدین هو مجاوزة حدالحق فیه

Excess in Faith is crossing the limit set therein.

The People of the Book, that is, the Jews and the Christians were both made addressees of this injunction because excess in Faith is the common factor between them. Both groups have fallen victims to nothing but excess in matters of Faith. The Christians committed excess in believing and honouring Sayyidnā 'Isā علیه السلام when they went on to the extreme of taking him to be God or son of God or the third God. As for Jews, they committed excess in disbelieving and rejecting him - not simply that they did not accept him even as a prophet, they were audacious enough to, God forbid, impute a false accusation to his revered mother, Sayyidah Maryam علیه السلام and to cast a slur against her parentage.

Since the disasterous deviation of Jews and Christians in matters of Faith was a common scene of the time, the Holy Prophet ﷺ specially instructed his community to be very careful about it. According to a report from Sayyidnā 'Umar رضی الله عنه appearing in the Musnad of Aḥmad, the Holy Prophet صلی الله علیه وسلم said:

لاتطرونی کما اطرت النصاری عیسی بن مریم، فانما انا عبد، فقولوا: "عبد الله ورسوله"

Do not exaggerate in my praise as was done by Christians in the case of 'Īsa son of Maryam علیه السلام . Beware, I am only a servant. So, call me a servant of Allah and His messenger. (This narration has also been reported by al-Bukhārī and Ibn al-Madīnī rating it as sound and authentically reported)

In brief, the sense of what he said is: I am one with everyone in being a servant of Allah and a human being. The highest rank I have is that I am a Messenger of Allah. Raising it higher to the limit that you go about taking me as partner in the attributes of Almighty Allah is excess and I do not want you to fall into this excess like the Christians. This excess in Faith practiced by the Jews and Christians did not remain limited to prophets only. Once used to it, they extended this attitude of theirs to the apostles, followers and deputies of the prophets. They had already assigned Godhood to their prophet, now they invested the followers of the prophet with immunity from sin. While doing so, they did not even take the trouble of investigating and making sure if such followers were genuine followers of the prophet and who correctly and firmly adhered to his teachings, or they were no more than hereditary religious scholars and guides. This resulted in the emergence of a leadership which was astray in itself and could do nothing but keep adding to the strayings of others. So, they ruined their Faith by practicing it erroneously from within. The Holy Qur'ān has described this very condition of these people in the verse: اِتَّخَذُوْٓا اَحْبَارَهُمْ وَرُهْبَانَهُمْ اَرْبَابًا مِّنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ (that is, these people took their religious leaders as objects of worship, other than Allah). It means that they had already been excessive in making their prophet a God, then, they started worshipping later-day religious leaders in the name of following the prophet!

The lesson to be learnt is that excess in Faith is a dangerous attitude which has destroyed the Faiths of earlier religious communities all in the fair name of Faith. So serious were the implications that our noble master devised perfect defences to keep his community safe against this terrible epidemic.

It appears in *Ḥadīth* that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم asked

Sayyidnā'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ on the occasion of Ḥajj that he should go and collect pebbles which he could use to throw at the *Jamarāt*. He returned with average-sized pebbles and presented them to the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم who liked them very much and said twice: بِمِثْلِهِنَّ، بِمِثْلِهِنَّ (like these, like these) which means that one should do his or her *ramy* at *Jamarāt* using average-sized pebbles like these. Then, he said:

إِيَّاكُمْ وَالْغُلُوَّ فِي الدِّيْنِ، فَإِنَّمَا هَلَكَ مَنْ قَبْلَكُمْ بِالْغُلُوِّ فِيْ دِيْنِهِمْ

It is your duty to avoid excess in Faith for communities before you were destroyed because of being excessive in their Faith.

Important Rules of Guidance

Some important rules come out from this ḥadīth:

1. The *masnūn* limit placed on pebbles thrown at the *Jamarāt* during the Ḥajj is that they should be average in size, neither too small nor too big. Throwing big rocks is included under excess in Faith.

2. The legal limit of everything is what the Holy Prophet ﷺ has left determined by his word and deed. Going beyond this limit is *ghuluww*, excess in Faith.

3. Precisely defined, excess in Faith is the crossing of the *masnūn* limit set for doing something.

The Limits of Materialism

The greed for worldly wealth and luxury beyond the level of need is considered blameworthy in Islam. Instructions to observe restraint against such urges are profusely spread out in the Qur'ān. But, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم while prohibiting attachment to wordly life greedily, has set its proper limits by his word and deed. He declared marriage to be his way and pursuaded others to follow his example. He explained the many-faceted blessings of having children. To live nicely and wisely with the family and to fulfill the rights of everyone properly were things he prescribed as obligatory. To work for one's family and earn a good living was what he called an obligation after the obligation (فریضة بعد الفریضة). He laid stress on people to engage in business, agriculture, industry and labour. The establishment of an Islamic state and government and the promotion of a system governed

by Islam was something he declared to be part of the mandate of prophethood. Thus, by acting in accordance with it, he went on to establish a state system throughout the Arabian peninsula which was later extended to other parts of the world in the East and the West. All this shows that being engaged in these pursuits within the limits of need is not counted as gross love of the material nor as greed and avarice.

The Jews and Christians did not realize the truth of the matter and got themselves involved in monasticism. The Holy Qur'ān has refuted this uncalled for involvement of theirs by saying:

وَرَهْبَانِيَّةَ ابْتَدَعُوهَا مَا كَتَبْنٰهَا عَلَيْهِمْ إِلَّا ابْتِغَآءَ رِضْوَانِ اللّٰهِ فَمَا رَعَوْهَا حَقَّ رِعَايَتِهَا

> It means that they took to ways of monasticism which were not prescribed for them by Allah except that they were to seek the pleasure of Allah Then, they failed to fulfill the conditions of what they had themselves imposed. (57:27)

The Limits of *Sunnah* and *Bid'ah*

By his word and deed, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has, in everything such as religious acts of worship and social transactions and dealings, demarcated the limits of moderation. Any deviation from these limits, whether it be in falling behind or in pushing ahead of them, is forbidden for it leads a believer astray from the right path. It was for this reason that he has very emphatically blocked the incursion of *bid'āt*: بدعات (self-promoted innovations in established religion) and *muḥdathāt*: محدثات (the embracing of everything appearing recent and novel in a given time as if a part of established religion which, in our time, are introduced under the fancy garbs of recension and modernity). Let us, therefore, remember what he said:

كُلُّ بِدْعَةٍ ضَلَالَةٌ، وَكُلُّ ضَلَالَةٍ فِى النَّارِ

> "Every *Bid'ah* is straying and every straying ends in *Jahannam*."

The word *Bid'ah* used in the ḥadīth refers to everything (assumed to be a part of religion) which is not there in the word and deed of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم clearly or through hint. Ḥaḍrat Shāh Waliyyullah has said that Islam condemns Bid'ah as a serious offence

because it opens the doors to alteration in religion. This is what happened with earlier religious communities. They added up things on their own to what their Book said and their prophet taught. Then came another generation, and the generations that followed, each adding its share to the original. Finally, everything got so mixed up that it became impossible to identify the true religion as distinct from the additions introduced by its adherents.

In his famous book, Ḥujjatullāh al-Bālighah, he has also given details of circumstances under which efforts have been made all over the world to inject alterations in the religion of Islam. He has also pointed out to the concern shown by the Sharī'ah of Islam which has installed defensive mechanisms on all such doors of incursion so that there remains no single outlet through which this disease could hit the Muslim community in epidemic proportions.

The Moderate Course in honouring and following religious leaders

One such cause referred to above is the practice of excess in Faith (غلو فى الدين). Two factors distinctly contribute to the emergence of this attitude: Firstly, the desire to undertake deep investigations unnecessarily or to be involved in far-fetched interpretations; and secondly, the choice of a hardened stance. It is a matter of great regret that , despite so much elaborations made by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and active restrictions placed by the Sharī'ah of Islam, the Muslim community is suffering fatally from this very disease of excess. Its fallout can be distinctly noticed in all departments of our Faith. Out of these, the field most affected is that of religious leaders where the question is: Whom to follow?

Stretching between two extremes, a group of Muslims has gone far out by holding that there is no such thing as a religious leader or teacher or *'Ālim* or *Shaykh*. They would say: 'The Book of Allah is sufficient for us. If they understand the Book of Allah so do we - هُمْ رِجَالٌ وَنَحْنُ رِجَالٌ - They are men, so are we.' The result was that every ambitious pseudo-intellectual - unlettered in Arabic and uninitiated into the facts of and insights into the Qur'ān and unfamiliar with the exegetical clarifications given by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم - considered it sufficient to look at translations of the Qur'ān and be hoisted as a

scholar of the Qur'ān! How can a *tafsīr* or explanation of the Qur'ān which has been authentically reported from the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم or from his direct disciples, the noble Companions, be ever ignored or bypassed? But, such is the breed of these dabblers in the discipline that they would dismiss anything in favour of their brain wave and still have the temerity to tie it with the Qur'ān. Although, had a book without a teacher been enough, Almighty Allah had the power to make written copies of the book become available for people at their homes - there was, then, no need to send a prophet to teach. A little reflection would reveal that this is not something peculiar to the Book of Allah. No one can, by simply looking at the translation of any book in the arts and sciences, become an expert in those fields. We have yet to find a physician who became a physician through a familiarity with translations of medical books. No engineer became an engineer by browsing through engineering texts. Even the study of common books on sewing and cooking has not made anyone succeed as a master tailor or chef. So, the truth lies elsewhere - the system needs the elements of teaching and learning under a teacher. This is all too established for everyone. But, it is indeed sad to see that the Qur'an and Sunnah alone, of all things around us, have been taken so casually as not to need any teacher. Thus, a fairly large group of educated people drifted down in the direction of serious deficiency when they took the lone study of the Qur'ān as all sufficient and totally dispensed of with the need to consult the exegesis and interpretation of early scholars, and to be guided by them.

On the other side of the extreme, a large group of Muslims got involved in a kind of excess which goaded them to take just about anyone as their religious guide almost blindly, and blindly it was that they started following them. They never took the trouble of finding out whether or not the person they were taking as guide came up to the standard of high intellectual achievement, corresponding personal behaviour, concern for the good of people and the genuine sense of responsibility before Allah. They did not even care to apply a much simpler test by looking at the kind of teaching such a person was imparting and making sure that it was not against the Qur'ān and Sunnah.

The Ideal Solution

The Sharī'ah of Islam has wisely shielded Muslims from falling into the trap of excess. The middle course in between the two extremes it has suggested is: Learn the Book of Allah (*Kitābullāh*) from the Men of Allah (*Rijālullāh*) and recognize the Men of Allah from the Book of Allah. In other words, one should first recognize those who are engaged in learning and communicating the true knowledge of the Qur'ān and Sunnah through the all too well-known teachings of these twin sources of Islamic Faith. Once this is settled, no intricate problem relating to Qur'ān and Sunnah will ever bother you - if you give precedence to their explanation above your own opinion, and follow them.

Verses 172 - 173

لَنْ يَّسْتَنْكِفَ الْمَسِيْحُ اَنْ يَّكُوْنَ عَبْدًا لِّلّٰهِ وَلَا الْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ
الْمُقَرَّبُوْنَ ؕ وَمَنْ يَّسْتَنْكِفْ عَنْ عِبَادَتِهٖ وَيَسْتَكْبِرْ فَسَيَحْشُرُهُمْ
اِلَيْهِ جَمِيْعًا ﴿۱۷۲﴾ فَاَمَّا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ
فَيُوَفِّيْهِمْ اُجُوْرَهُمْ وَيَزِيْدُهُمْ مِّنْ فَضْلِهٖ ۚ وَاَمَّا الَّذِيْنَ اسْتَنْكَفُوْا
وَاسْتَكْبَرُوْا فَيُعَذِّبُهُمْ عَذَابًا اَلِيْمًا ۙ وَّلَا يَجِدُوْنَ لَهُمْ مِّنْ دُوْنِ
اللّٰهِ وَلِيًّا وَّلَا نَصِيْرًا ﴿۱۷۳﴾

The Masīḥ (Jesus) shall never spurn being a slave of Allah, nor shall the angels, the close ones. And whoever spurns His worship and shows arrogance -- then, He shall gather all of them before Himself. [172] **As for those who believe and do good deeds, He shall give them their reward in full, and give them more out of His grace. But, to those who spurn and show arrogance, He shall give a painful punishment, and they shall find for themselves not a friend other than Allah nor a helper.** [173]

From the affirmation of Allah's absolute purity and the refutation of assumed Godhood of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام earlier, the text now moves to further strengthen the argument by showing that Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام would himself confess to being a servant of Allah and so will the angels (which includes Sayyidnā Jibra'īl عليه السلام alleged to be a person of Trinity). Then, follows the warning for those who choose to

retract in distaste and the good news for those who believe and are good in deeds for they will be rewarded for their belief and deeds with many more added graces from Allah.

Commentary

The Honour of being a servant of Allah

Maulānā Shabbīr Aḥmad 'Usmānī, in his comments on the opening statement of Verse 172: لَنْ يَّسْتَنْكِفَ الْمَسِيْحُ اَنْ يَّكُوْنَ عَبْدًا لِّلّٰهِ (The Masīḥ shall never spurn being a slave of Allah, nor shall the angels, the close ones), says that so it is because being a servant of Allah, being devoted to His worship and being obedient to His will and command, is an honour by itself and certainly a nobility of the highest class. Sayyidnā Masīḥ علیہ السلام and the close angels are the best testifiers to the worth and value of this blessing. How could they spurn an honour like that? Quite contrary to this, the worst disgrace and dishonour there can be imagined lies in worshipping someone other than Allah. This is what the Christians did when they took Sayyidnā Masīḥ علیہ السلام as the son of Allah and the object of their worship. Similar was the case with disbelievers who took angels as daughters of Allah and started worshipping them alongwith their idols. So, for them, there is punishment, and disgrace. (Notes in Tafsīr Usmānī)

Verses 174 - 175

يٰۤاَيُّهَا النَّاسُ قَدْ جَآءَكُمْ بُرْهَانٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ وَاَنْزَلْنَاۤ اِلَيْكُمْ نُوْرًا مُّبِيْنًا ﴿١٧٤﴾ فَاَمَّا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا بِاللّٰهِ وَاعْتَصَمُوْا بِهٖ فَسَيُدْخِلُهُمْ فِيْ رَحْمَةٍ مِّنْهُ وَفَضْلٍ ۙ وَّيَهْدِيْهِمْ اِلَيْهِ صِرَاطًا مُّسْتَقِيْمًا ﴿١٧٥﴾

O men, a proof has come to you from your Lord and We have sent down to you a vivid light. [174] **Now those who believe in Allah and hold on to Him - He shall admit them into Mercy from Him, and Grace, and shall lead them to Himself through a straight path.** [175]

After a refutation of beliefs held by Christians, specially those which ascribe Godhood to Jesus, alongwith the promise of reward for those who acknowledge the truth and punishment for those who insist on denying, the text turns to a universal address praising the blessed status and mission of His Messenger who taught what was the truth

revealed to him, who conveyed the truth of the Qur'ān admirably, and also those who believed in and testified to the truth of the Book and the Messenger.

What is *Burhān*?

The word, *Burhān*, appearing in verse 174: قَدْ جَآءَكُمْ بُرْهَانٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ (a proof has come to you from your Lord) lexically means 'proof'. It refers to the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم . (Rūḥ al-Maʻānī)

Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ says that the Holy Prophet ﷺ was referred to as 'Burhān' in consideration of his blessed person, his noble morals, his miracles and his being the very recipient of the revelation of the Book of Allah. All these are open proofs of his prophethood beyond which there remains no need for any other proof. Thus, in summation, his person is, in itself, proof personified.

As for the word, *Nūr* in: وَاَنْزَلْنَآ اِلَيْكُمْ نُوْرًا مُّبِيْنًا (and We have sent down to you a vivid light) (174), it refers to the Holy Qur'ān (Rūḥ al-Maʻānī) which also seems to be the case in Verse 15 of Sūrah al-Mā'idah (5): قَدْ جَآءَكُمْ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ نُوْرٌ وَّ كِتٰبٌ مُّبِيْنٌ (There has come to you from Allah a light and clear Book). In the explanatory translation of Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thānavī in Bayān al-Qur'ān, the rendering of this verse appears as: 'There has come to you from Allah a light and (which is) a clear Book (that is) the Qur'ān.' In this verse, what has been first identified as '*Nūr*' (light) has later been called '*kitabum-mubīn*' (clear Book). Let there be no doubt at this point that the conjunction demands dissimilarity, therefore, *Nūr* (light) and *Kitāb* (book) cannot be one and the same thing. The answer is that dissimilarity in expression is sufficient, even though the meanings are the same. (Rūḥ al-Maʻānī)

And if '*Nūr*' (light) is taken as referring to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and '*Kitāb*' (the Book) to the Holy Qur'ān - that will also be correct (Rūḥ al-Maʻānī). But, this does not go on to prove that the Holy Prophet ﷺ was *Nūr* or light in the literal sense, therefore, it is not against his being physically human.

Verse 176

يَسْتَفْتُوْنَكَ ۭ قُلِ اللّٰهُ يُفْتِيْكُمْ فِي الْكَلٰلَةِ ۭ اِنِ امْرُؤٌا هَلَكَ
لَيْسَ لَهٗ وَلَدٌ وَّلَهٗٓ اُخْتٌ فَلَهَا نِصْفُ مَا تَرَكَ ۚ وَهُوَ يَرِثُهَآ اِنْ
لَّمْ يَكُنْ لَّهَا وَلَدٌ ۭ فَاِنْ كَانَتَا اثْنَتَيْنِ فَلَهُمَا الثُّلُثٰنِ مِمَّا تَرَكَ ۭ
وَاِنْ كَانُوْٓا اِخْوَةً رِّجَالًا وَّنِسَاۗءً فَلِلذَّكَرِ مِثْلُ حَظِّ الْاُنْثَيَيْنِ ۭ

يُبَيِّنُ اللّٰهُ لَكُمْ اَنْ تَضِلُّوْا ۗ وَاللّٰهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿١٧٦﴾

They seek a ruling from you. Say, "Allah gives you the ruling concerning Kalalah.[1] If a person dies having no son, but he does have a sister, then, she gets one half of what he leaves. And he will inherit her if she has no child. And if they are two (sisters), they get two third of what he leaves. And if they are brothers and sisters, both male and female, then, the male gets a share equal to that of two females." Allah explains to you lest you should go astray. And Allah is fully aware of everything. [176]

A little after the beginning of Sūrah al-Nisā', there appeared some injunctions relating to inheritance. Then, after a considerable gap, the text returned to the injunction of inheritance alongwith others. Now, at the end of the Sūrah, the text reverts to the subject once again. Perhaps the wisdom behind this scattering of the subject at three different places could be the consideration of prevailing injustice in matters of inheritance before the advent of Islam. By taking it up in the beginning, then in the middle, and finally in the end, it was hoped that the addressees would be gradually alerted to the need of justice in this area and would thus be enabled to show their maximum concern.

Summary of the Rulings given[2]

The verse (176) was revealed in answer to the question posed by some Companions of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم regarding the inheritence of a *Kalālah*. *Kalālah* means a person who dies leaving neither children nor parents. The verse has clarified that the property left by a *Kalālah* shall be distributed in the following manner:

(1) If the *Kalālah* has left one real sister, or one half sister from father's side,[3] then, after settling the preferential rights (such as debts, wills, burial expenses) she will get one half of the property. The other

1. *Kalalah*: A person who has no ascendent or descendent at the time of his death.

2. This summary is based on the خلاصہ تفسیر given in the original, without translating it word-by-word. (Muhammad Taqi Usmani)

3. As for a half sister from mother's side, her share has already been mentioned in 4:12 as being one sixth if she is alone. And if there are two or more such sisters or brothers, they will share one third of the property equally. (Muhammad Taqi Usmani)

half will be given to the heirs falling in the category of *'Aṣbāt*. If no heir from the category of *'Aṣbāt* is alive, then this half, too, will be given back to the sister of the deceased (meaning thereby that she will secure the whole property).

(2) If the sister referred to in para (1) above dies, and leaves no children, and her brother is alive, then he will get the whole property left by her.

(3) If a *Kalālah*, male or female, dies and leaves two or more sisters, either real sisters or half-sisters from father's side then they shall get two thirds of the property left by the *Kalālah*. The remaining one third will be given to *'Aṣbāt*, if any, and in the absence of *'Aṣbāt* this one third will also be given to the sisters who will distribute their share among themselves equally.

(4) If a *Kalālah* leaves behind a combination of brothers and sisters (either real or from father's side only), then the whole property, after satisfying the preferential rights, shall be distributed between them on the principle that every brother will get twice the share of every sister.

Important Notes

1. The cause of revelation and the injunction of *Kalālah* described in the verse beginning with: يَسْتَفْتُوْنَكَ قُلِ اللّٰهُ يُفْتِيْكُمْ فِى الْكَلٰلَةِ (They seek a ruling from you. Say, "Allah gives you the ruling concerning *kalālah*") provides us with information on certain important aspects. To be noted first is a comparison between two examples given earlier in the text. In verse 170: وَإِنْ تَكْفُرُوْا فَإِنَّ لِلّٰهِ مَا فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِى الْاَرْضِ (And if you disbelieve, then, to Allah belongs what is in the heavens and the earth), there was the condition of disbelievers. Then came a similar statement in Verse 174: فَاَمَّا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا بِاللّٰهِ وَاعْتَصَمُوْا بِهٖ الخ (Now those who believe in Allah and hold on to Him) which presented the model of the noble Companions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. These two parallel but divergent states of the believers and the disbelievers were brought into focus so that people can fully understand how astray and evil were those who turned away from the revelation (*waḥy*) and how true and virtuous were those who followed it.

2. Subsequent to observations made above, it also becomes obvious

that the People of the Book did something terrible when they made the abomination of suggesting a partner and son in the purest conceivable divinity of Almighty Allah an article of their faith. They also went as far as taking a blatant position against the Divine revelation.

Quite contrary to this is the life style of the nobel Companions of the Messenger of Allah, may the blessing of Allah and peace be upon him. Not to say much about their consistent concern for the fundamentals of Faith and the most devoted performance of acts of worship, they would be equally inquisitive and eager to find out their obligations in matters subsidiary and commonplace such as those of inheritance and marriage. They would wait for *Waḥy*, the command of Allah through revelation and they would look for guidance from the Holy Prophet ﷺ in everything they did. Though, it is easier to do your own bidding under the dictate of reason or desire, yet they did not elect to be ruled by their personal desire or reason. If they did not understand something at a given time, they would return to the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم to recheck until they were satisfied. Here are two sets of people, so different and so apart!

3. This also tells us that our noble Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم would not give a decision on his own without the guiding command of *Waḥy* (revelation). If there was no standing guidance revealed through *Waḥy* present in a certain case, he would put his decision on hold and wait for the coming of *Waḥy*. When it did, he gave his verdict. In addition to that, there is a subtle hint here in the direction of the wisdom behind the gradual revelation of the Qur'ān. If the whole Book was revealed all at one fixed time as demanded by the People of the Book, it would have not carried the same benefits as there are in the fact that the Qur'ān was revealed as needed and when appropriate, all functionally spaced out. This modality accommodated the requirements of addressees who could ask a question out of some necessity and be answered through the recited revelation (*al-Waḥy al-Matluww*). An example of this methodology appears right here in the present verse while others appear at several other occasions in the Qur'ān. No doubt, this form is far beneficial, but the core of its distinction lies elsewhere. That is because of the most refined sublimity of men and women of faith who turn to Allah in remembrance and are honoured by being

addressed by their most exalted Creator. This is indeed a great honour never granted to any other community. Certainly no grace is greater than the grace granted by Allah, the ultimate dispenser. Now, any verse of the Qur'ān which was revealed in the favour of or in answer to the question of a particular Companion is treasured as a testament of his virtues. And a *Waḥy* which came favouring the position taken by one of them on the occasion of some matter causing difference of opinion, is sufficient to keep the name and merit of that Companion alive right upto the Day of Doom.

Thus, by referring to the question and answer regarding *Kalālah*, hint has been given towards similar questions and answers elsewhere.

(Exegetical notes, Tafsīr 'Usmānī
by Maulanā Shabbīr Aḥmad 'Usmānī)

Praised be Allah. Sūrah al-Nisā' ends here

وَلِلّٰهِ الْحَمْدُ اَوَّلَهٗ وَاٰخِرَهٗ

MA'ĀRIFUL-QUR'ĀN

The End of Volume Two

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